

No. 32

# World RAINFOREST Report

NOVEMBER 1995

**TIBET:**  
*The Destruction  
of Shangri-La*



McLibel Trial: Guess Who's on Trial Now?

**BHP in PNG: Guilty of Contempt**

**Action Pages:** How You Can Help Forests



## Editorial

### World Rainforest Report "100 Club" Appeal

I have been editing World Rainforest Report in an unpaid capacity since 1989, and continuing to do so has become increasingly difficult over the last two years. Due mainly to increased financial pressures, I felt that I may reluctantly have to abandon WRR and find a paid job. A friend of mine, Bill Kidd, heard about my predicament and launched the "WRR 100 Club" Appeal, asking for people willing to donate money to help pay my daily expenses. The response has been wonderful, and the short term survival of World Rainforest Report is no longer in doubt. My heartfelt thanks go to all those who have supported the appeal so generously.

### WRR on the Web

Another major development has been the idea of having a version of WRR on the World Wide Web. This would mean that far more people will have access to the information contained in WRR. In addition, the information on the Web version would be far more up-to-date than is possible in the paper version you are reading now. We had hoped to run an article in this WRR on the ways in which environmental activists can use computers to increase their effectiveness. However that has not been possible and we will now run that article in WRR33.

### Timber Labelling

In the last WRR, there appeared an article entitled "Why the FSC Will Fail" by Rosalind Reeve. It was a critique of the Forest Stewardship Council's efforts to provide a labelling system for ecologically sound timber on the international market. I decided to run it not because I or the Rainforest Information Centre opposes what the FSC is attempting, but because I felt there was an urgent need for more debate about the pros and cons of timber labelling. I received some criticism for running the article, mainly because it was three years old and, some people believed, out of date. However, I had experienced some difficulty in getting a comprehensive article voicing concerns about timber labelling, and Pro Regenwald, the organisation on whose behalf the article was written, confirmed that it was still representative of their views. I also believe Rosalind Reeve's article raises basic issues which the FSC or any other labelling scheme, must confront if it is to succeed. This edition of WRR contains two articles on timber labelling. One putting the case for the FSC scheme and the other opposing it. In WRR33 we plan to include an article responding directly to the issues raised in Rosalind Reeve's article.

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the Rainforest Information Centre*



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## The McLibel Trial

# "Guess Who's On Trial Now?"

*It began as an attempt by McDonald's to combat the dissemination of material critical of the \$24 billion a year company. However, their libel case against Helen Steel and Dave Morris, two unwaged London Greenpeace supporters, has gone badly wrong for the fast food company. As Dave Morris remarked, "Guess who's on trial now?". Each day of the protracted case has revealed more and more information damaging to the food giant's tarnished image.*

Note: The following account was compiled from extracts of bulletins of the McLibel Support Campaign. All direct quotes are from transcripts of the trial proceedings. London Greenpeace is a small organisation unconnected to Greenpeace International.

The trial is already the longest-running libel case in the UK. It is expected to last well into 1996 and appears likely to become the longest civil trial ever held in Britain.

The libel is alleged to have occurred between 1980 and 1990. Approximately 180 witnesses from the UK and around the world are giving evidence in court on all the issues in the case, namely:

- \* The connection between multinational companies like McDonald's, cash crops and starvation in the Third World.
- \* The responsibility of corporations such as McDonald's for damage to the environment, including destruction of rainforests.
- \* McDonald's promotion and sale of food with a low fibre, high fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugar content, and the links between a diet of this type and the major degenerative diseases in western society, including heart disease and cancer.
- \* McDonald's exploitation of children by its use of advertisements and gimmicks to sell unhealthy products.
- \* The barbaric way that animals are reared and slaughtered to supply products for McDonald's.
- \* The lousy conditions that workers in the catering industry are forced to work under, and the low wages paid by McDonald's.
- \* McDonald's hostility towards trade unions.

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## McDonald's and Rainforest Destruction

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The rainforests section of the Trial is due to begin in December 1995. However, during the Defendants' opening speeches, internal company documents were read to the court in which McDonald's admitted the purchase in the UK in 1983 of beef imported from Brazil, a rainforest country -- something which the company had always denied. When the Defendants



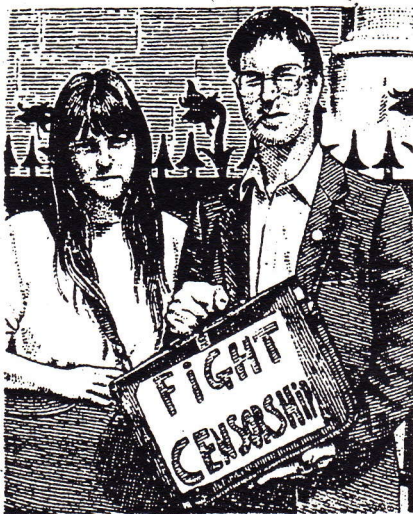
attempted to question a witness for McDonald's about these documents, Mr Rampton QC made an objection claiming that the documents could not be used in court because they had been "disclosed by mistake". Two weeks later, after the witness had left the court, just before there was to be a legal argument over this, Mr Rampton withdrew his objection.

Mr Oakley, Chief Purchasing Officer and Senior Vice-President of McDonald's UK and Ireland, said he was aware that the company had purchased Brazilian beef. He claimed it was for a relatively short period but said he was not sure how long exactly. He said that McDonald's claimed policy of not using beef which originated outside the European Economic Community was not brought in until "around the mid-80's - maybe 1986".

A letter from the US Corporation to a member of the public in 1982 stated that "McDonald's has a long standing policy of buying all of our products from the host country where we are doing business" ... "as a result we can assure you that the only Brazilian beef used by McDonald's is that purchased by the six stores located in Brazil itself". Mr Oakley said he thought the letter was referring to the finished products (hamburgers), it was not "talking about raw ingredients". He denied that the purchase of Brazilian beef for use in the UK was in breach of McDonald's policy saying "No it was not. We still bought the hamburgers locally. We did not buy the ingredients locally".

Despite objections by the company's highly-paid barrister, during the opening speeches an extract from the TV





Helen Steel and Dave Morris

documentary "Jungle burger" was shown, in which McDonald's beef suppliers in Costa Rica stated that they also supplied beef for use by McDonald's in the USA. On top of this, McDonald's admitted that in Costa Rica their stores used beef reared on ex-rainforest land (deforested as recently as ten years previously), contrary to their own propaganda.

David Walker, the Chairman and owner of McKey foods gave evidence for McDonald's. McKeys, a former subsidiary of McDonald's, has been the sole supplier since 1978 of the company's UK hamburgers, now one million per day.

Mr Walker admitted that he had personally organised the direct import of 5 consignments of Brazilian beef for McDonald's UK stores in 1983-4 - sold to them by the Vestey's plant at Barretos, Brazil. A letter from Mr Walker to the managing director of Weddel's (a Vestey subsidiary) was quoted in court. It revealed that the imports were a matter of great controversy. Mr Walker confirmed that he had written the letter, which stated that Prince Phillip, the President of the World Wildlife Fund (now the World Wide Fund for Nature), had recently met George Cohon, President of McDonald's Canada, and had said (quoting from the Walker letter 17/5/83): "So you are the people who are tearing down the Brazilian rainforests and breeding cattle" to which the reply was "I think you are mistaken" whereupon HRH said "Rubbish" and stormed away. Following this, the letter stated that Fred Turner, the Chairman of McDonald's Corporation "issued a worldwide edict that no McDonald's plant was to use Brazilian beef". The same letter revealed that Bob Rhea, then Managing Director of McDonald's UK, had given Walker permission to use the Brazilian beef imports. The imports went through, and were kept secret from Prince Phillip, from the World Wildlife Fund, from the BBC (who were sued the following year) and from Friends of the Earth (in meetings in 1985). The whole scandal only came to light due to a handwritten letter mistakenly enclosed by McDonald's solicitors in a bundle of other documents to the McLibel Defendants last year.

## Best Free Entertainment in Town

An article in the *Guardian* (January 17 1995) reported that before the trial opened in June 1994, McDonald's Barrister, Richard Rampton QC, predicted that the trial would last three or four weeks. According to the article, five activists were originally charged by McDonald's after the company had infiltrated London Greenpeace meetings. Advised that they would not be eligible for legal aid, three of the five made an apology to McDonald's, while Steel and Morris decided to fight the case themselves. This meant "mastering court procedures, legal jargon and a welter of scientific detail, as well as 30,000 pages of trial documents", the *Guardian* reported. McDonald's legal expenses are reported to be around five thousand pounds a day, and by the end of the trial will have exceeded two million pounds, the *Guardian* claimed. One observer called the trial "the best free entertainment in London". Some of the discussion in the trial centred around McDonald's claim that "every time you eat at McDonald's, you eat good nutritious food". According to the *Guardian* report, McDonald's executives explained that "nutritious" meant that the food "contained nutrients". Under cross examination, the *Guardian* said, the executives agreed that all food contained nutrients, although there was some debate about black tea. Prof. Wheelock, McDonald's consultant on nutrition, when asked to define "junk food", said it was "whatever a person doesn't like" (In his case semolina). With disbelief mounting in the court room, Richard Brampton (McDonald's QC) intervened to say that McDonald's was not objecting to the description of their food as junk food.

The *Guardian* article also reported that the actor who originally played Ronald McDonald said in a statement read by the Defendants at the trial that: "I brainwashed youngsters into doing wrong. I want to apologise to children everywhere for selling out to concerns who make millions by murdering animals". According to its annual report, McDonald's worldwide expenditure on advertising and promotions in 1993 totalled \$1.4 billion.

At the time of the first anniversary of the trial, it was widely reported that McDonald's had initiated secret settlement negotiations with the Defendants. They twice flew members of their Board of Directors to London to meet with Helen and Dave to seek ways of ending the case. McDonald's is clearly worried about the way the case is going and the bad publicity they are receiving. Helen and Dave made their pre-conditions for settling clear: McDonald's should undertake not to sue anyone for making similar criticisms again, apologise to those they have sued in the past, and pay a substantial sum to a third party in lieu of the Defendants' costs.






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## A Forest of Lies

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McDonald's claim that "Nowhere in the world does McDonald's use of beef threaten or remotely involve the tropical forests". The company says they do not use beef from cattle reared on *recently* deforested land. Their stated policy is that they only use EU-produced beef in the UK, and US-produced beef in the USA.

In the 1980s, the company forced retractions on the basis that their suppliers were not using *any* ex-rainforest land to rear the cattle. Here is what McDonald's said about rainforests on four occasions in that decade:

1. A letter from the solicitors of the McDonald's Corporation on the BBC dated 1st May 1984 stated "Neither the US nor the Canadian companies nor any other McDonald's company has used or does use meat which comes from cattle reared in former rainforest areas".

2. George Cohon (President of McDonald's Canada) wrote to Monte Hummel (Executive Director of the World Wildlife Fund Canada) on 22 February 1983 regarding the Prince Phillip dispute, stating that "McDonald's worldwide is not involved in any manner in dealing with rainforests or their removal or in buying beef as a result of cattle that have been grazing in areas that formerly were rainforests".

3. The solicitors for McDonald's Corporation wrote to Veggies (a UK educational organisation) on 8th October 1987 saying "On our client's behalf...neither their USA nor Canadian companies or any other company in their group has used or does use meat which comes from cattle reared in former rainforests" in demanding cessation of Veggies' publication of the London Greenpeace fact sheet.

4. A letter from the McDonald's Corporation to a member of the public in the UK on July 26 1982 stated "we can assure you that the only Brazilian beef used by McDonald's is that purchased by the six stores located in Brazil itself...we believe that our policy helps to enable its [the rainforest's] preservation by reducing demand for exported beef.

However, all the statements are completely untrue. A PR

person from McDonald's UK admitted to David Rose (a journalist from the *Observer*) in February 1993 that when they opened stores in Costa Rica in 1970, they were using beef cattle from ex-rainforest land, deforested in the 1950s and 60s. In other words, some of it had been cleared less than ten years earlier. This has now been admitted by Ray Cesca, Director of Global Purchasing of the McDonald's Corporation in his statement read out during the trial. McDonald's own definition of "recently deforested" is unclear and seems to fluctuate between 10 and 25 years or from "the time that we arrive...in a country" (Gomez Gonzales, International Meat Purchasing Manager of McDonald's Corporation, Day 68 of the Trial).

In 1984, the BBC received a letter from McDonald's solicitors after a programme called "Nature" was broadcast which inferred that there were links between McDonald's and rainforest destruction. The BBC then broadcast an apology.

McDonald's also extracted an apology from Channel 4 following legal threats concerning the "Jungleburger" film. In the film, made by a German company, which was broadcast on C4 in 1989, Sergio Quintana, the sales director of Coop Montecillos (sole supplier of beef for McDonald's stores in Costa Rica since 1970) stated on camera that his beef was being supplied to McDonald's in the USA. Helen and Dave [the Defendants] are calling the maker of the film, to give evidence about this. The documentary has been shown in court and continues to be shown in Germany and other countries.

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## Nutrition

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A McDonald's expert witness, Professor Verner Wheelock, agreed that a typical McDonald's meal was high in fat, saturated fat and sodium. Paul Preston, McDonald's UK President had earlier admitted that McDonald's products were low in fibre. Wheelock said "we can be very confident that diet is the primary factor in the development of most of the degenerative diseases in many industrialised countries". He also admitted there was a lot of evidence that such diseases were related to a diet high in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar and low in dietary fibre.

**"When you see the Golden Arches you're probably heading for the pearly gates"**

Dr Neal Barnard, President of the US Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine, stated that "McDonald's products clearly contain significantly more fat than government guidelines and health authorities recommend". He quoted the director of a major study into heart disease, Dr William Castelli, who said "when you see the Golden Arches, you're probably heading for the pearly gates".



## Animals

Dr Neville Gregory, McDonald's expert witness on the rearing and slaughter of animals, said that the chickens used to make "Chicken McNuggets" and "McChicken sandwiches" were crammed into sheds with less than the size of an A4 sheet of paper per bird and no access to sunlight. At age 6-7 weeks, the birds were transported to the slaughterhouse, where they were hung upside down before being electrically stunned in water. Up to 14% of the chickens received pre-stun shocks, which cause distress. One per cent of birds (1,350 per day) were decapitated without being stunned, which Dr Gregory agreed could cause suffering. A further one per cent were not dead on entering the scalding tank. He agreed that the stunning and killing methods did not comply with government codes of practice and might lead to distress and pain for the birds.

Timothy Chambers, Quality Assurance Manager from Midland Meat Packers (the largest of dozens of abattoirs supplying beef for McDonald's hamburgers) admitted that his company did use electric shock goads to move cattle around, contrary to claims by McDonald's that this practice was banned by their suppliers. Mr Kenny, McDonald's Senior Quality Assurance Supervisor, asserted that McDonald's had a policy against the use of electric goads but was unaware that their largest supplying slaughterhouse was still using such goads.

## What You Can Do

**The McLibel Campaign urgently needs donations and other support see the section on the McLibel Campaign in the Action Pages.**



*Talking Leaves* is a journal of deep ecology, inspired personal activism rooted in earthen spirituality. Past issues have featured articles by Gary Snyder, Starhawk, John Seed, Joanna Macy, Bill Devall, Lone Wolf Circles, Barbara Mor, Winona LaDuke, etc.

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## Indigenous Wilderness

by Noel Pearson

When I see Australian environmentalists battling for the rights of the Penan in Malaysia or the Yanomami in Brazil, but talking about wilderness in Australia, where the Wuthathi or the Waanyi still struggle for the recognition of their relationship with their homelands, I wonder how much *terra nullius* lingers in contemporary ideas about people and land. Has the *terra nullius* of the old country colonist become the *homo nullius* of the New Age conservationist?

The invisibility of Aboriginal people to defenders of wilderness is more understandable when you consider the extent of dispossession in areas where the conservation movement has been galvanised into action. In many cases indigenous people had simply been eradicated.

*Terra nullius* has been achieved by dispossession, by warfare, murder, massacres, disease and kidnappings during the early frontier periods. The myth of unpopulated lands was deliberately fostered by the prohibition of languages, the banning of ceremonies and the denial of access to sacred sites and hunting grounds.

It is very important that the concept of wilderness, that was born in an Australia still ruled by *terra nullius*, is seen for what it is. It must not be a new licence for old dispossession. In our enthusiasm for wilderness, we must be sure we do not lose sight of the people who come from it. It is no coincidence that areas of 'high wilderness quality' such as Cape York and the Kimberley remain Aboriginal domains with living people connected with all of the land in the region. It is the legacy of a long and tenacious resistance by generations of traditional owners against denial.

The history of the Aboriginal landscape is still carried down from generation to generation through stories, song and art. The land has been shaped by ancestors and their actions, is managed and modified by people living now, and looked after for succeeding generations. The landscape is imbued with culture; the land and the people depend on each other for care and survival. The land needs its people and the people need their land.

Over tens of thousands of years the maintenance of the Australian environment has been dependent upon the understanding and actions of its custodians. The arrival of a new people, with no understanding of the ecology of their new homeland proved the undoing of forty thousand years of Aboriginal stewardship. Aboriginal people on Cape York Peninsula now have to deal with a new array of contemporary hazards, such as changed fire regimes, soil erosion, feral animals and weeds, pollution of waterways and a decline in marine resources.

The future of wilderness protection on Cape York Peninsula is one where Aboriginal people are the frontline of conservation management. It is inspiring that ACF is a non-aboriginal group at the forefront of this change in Australia's perception of the environment and the people who come from it. The abandonment of *terra nullius* in Australia now makes this imperative.

Noel Pearson is Executive Director of the Cape York Land Council. This article was reprinted from a supplement on Cape York Peninsula in *Habitat*, the Journal of the Australian Conservation Foundation

## What You Can Do:

The Cape York Indigenous Environment Foundation aims to acquire properties of cultural and environmental significance on Cape York Peninsula to return ownership to Aboriginal traditional owners. Donations are needed urgently.

**See article in Action Pages for details.**



# BHP GUILTY OF CONTEMPT

*Australian mining and industrial giant, BHP, was found guilty of contempt of court yesterday by the Supreme Court of Victoria. The ruling has forced the company to abandon its attempts to undermine a \$4 billion damages claim by Papua New Guinean land owners over its Ok Tedi mine.*

Justice Phillip Cummins ruled that BHP had interfered with the administration of justice when it collaborated with the PNG Government in drafting an agreement to enable the passing of legislation to end the massive environmental damages claim by landowners against the Ok Tedi mine.

Slater & Gordon, the legal representatives for some 30,000 PNG villagers in the case against BHP, applied for a restraining order to stop BHP consenting to the legislation. However, BHP elected not to give its consent to the bill.

The ruling makes BHP the biggest Australian company ever to be convicted of contempt of court. In passing judgement, Justice Cummins said "I am satisfied that the actions of the first defendant [BHP] which I have found beyond reasonable doubt, constitute a clear contempt of this court".

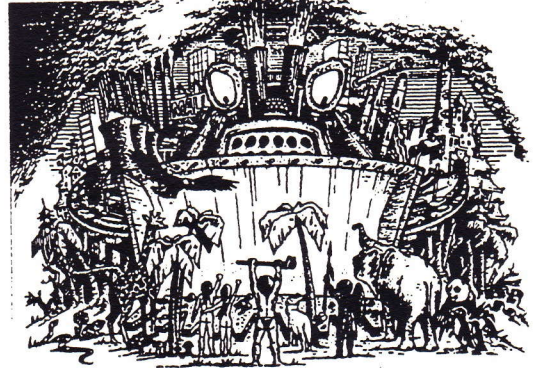
He ruled that BHP committed contempt of court when its lawyers and the PNG Government drew up the Ok Tedi Eighth Supplemental Agreement, which if made law would render compensation claims against the Ok Tedi mine illegal and subject to the imposition of fines of up to \$100,000.

BHP said the judgement was contrary to their legal advice and that they would appeal against it. BHP argued in the case that the purpose of the Eighth Supplemental Agreement was to "provide automatic compensation to Ok Tedi/Fly River people for the changes to their environment resulting from the mine and associated operations". The Agreement included a compensation package to those affected by alleged environmental damage, providing \$110 million over the next 15 years.

Slater & Gordon argued for the landowners that the draft bill, which required BHP's consent to be made into law, would prevent landowners from making legitimate claims for damages purported to total \$4 billion.

In response to the Victorian Court's ruling, the PNG Government asserted its sovereign right to proceed with the Ok Tedi mine legislation despite the ruling. However, the Government subsequently indicated that it may scrap its plans to fine landowners who claim damages against BHP.

Share prices of the company plummeted by 16 cents in the Australian Stock Exchange hours after the court ruling was announced. Justice Cummins adjourned the court for a month to hear submissions and will then rule on a suitable punishment for the offence. Observers believe it could involve a substantial fine.



## Complaints Over BHP Ads.

In carefully worded advertisements in the *Australian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other prominent Australian newspapers, BHP moved to counter the adverse publicity it has suffered as a result of the Ok Tedi landowners' compensation claims. The advertisements claimed that as a result of BHP's involvement in the region, local people had received benefits in health, education and services. The advertisements did not discuss the issue of damage to the Ok Tedi River.

The advertisements provoked a complaint to the Advertising Standards Council. The complaint has been lodged by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the Australian Consumers Association. They claim the advertisement by BHP in the *Australian Financial Review* last month was false and misleading. BHP has been advised of the complaint and has been asked to respond. The Council reportedly allows "a fair degree of leniency" in advocacy advertisements such as BHP's, and is likely to intervene only if the advertisement could be shown to play unduly on fear and/or to make one or more claims of fact that could not be substantiated.

Helen Rosenblum, a policy analyst for ACF, asked "Why isn't BHP putting the effort and dollars... into finding responsible alternatives to dumping 85,000 tonnes of tailing per day into the Fly River system?"



# Ex-Forest Minister's Housing Linked to Rimbunan Hijau

*According to PNG's Saturday Independent, logging giant Rimbunan Hijau of Malaysia owns the K335,000 house that ex-Forest Minister Posai has been occupying and the suspended forest minister's power bills are sent to a Rimbunan Hijau subsidiary. Rimbunan Hijau is the largest exporter of logs from PNG. Corruption continues to pervade the forestry industry in Papua New Guinea.*

Mr Posai became the centre of controversy when he announced moves to suspend controls on logging which the previous Forest Minister, Mr Neville, had introduced with a view to limiting the export of logs and to require downstream processing of timber and greater control of the resources by local landowners. He also tried unsuccessfully to recentralize all powers of forest project approval in his office.

In a front page article, the *Independent* traced ownership of the house to Trinco Number 10, a catering company with the same phone number and address as that of logging company Niugini Lumber Merchants Pty Ltd. The *Independent* article said Niugini Lumber Merchants Pty Ltd is a subsidiary of Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau. According to the *Independent*, the electricity bills for the property are being sent to Niugini Lumber Merchants.

The *Independent* named Trinco Number 10's shareholders and directors are Henry Peni and Dios Dado Gatdula. "Mr Peni was among those who were vocal against the new forestry guidelines when they were introduced by the former Forest Minister Tim Neville in the Wingti Government in 1992" the *Independent* said.

Mr Peni and Peter Harold, the brother of Mr Posai and managing director of the timber landowner company, Sare Resources Pty Ltd., held a series of public meetings in 1992 at which the media and representatives of Rimbunan Hijau were present. The aim of the meetings, the *Independent* claimed, was to stop Neville's new forestry guidelines from going through parliament.

Mr Posai was recently found guilty by PNG's Leadership Tribunal on 26 counts of misconduct during his term as Minister for Home Affairs and Youth in 1992 and 1993. The tribunal recommended to the Governor General that Mr Posai be dismissed from office and from parliament.

Mr Posai became Minister for Forests in the Chan Government when former Minister Neville moved to the opposition benches after the previous government was ousted in September 1994.

Prior to his removal from office, in addition to his moves to suspend controls on logging, Mr Posai had also announced moves to increase his power to issue, suspend, transfer, amend and extend logging licences.

Mr Posai was referred to the Public Prosecutor in January on 30-counts of misconduct in office. The Public Prosecutor's

office referred him to the Leadership Tribunal in early April and he was suspended from the office of Minister for Forests.

Mr Posai owns about 4,000 ha. of forest. When appointed Minister for Forests, he was chairman of local landowner groups that held concessions in the Kandrian District.

Source: *The Saturday Independent*

## East Sepik: Hunstein Range Logging Plans

According to WWF Australia, planning continues for logging in the Hunstein Range, East Sepik. One proposal, the April-Salumei timber project, would mean 438,000 ha., nearly all of the commercial timber in East Sepik, would be harvested. If this went ahead, it would be one of the largest industrial timber operations in the world. This is despite the request of many of the landowners of the Hunstein Range to have their land declared a conservation area excluded from logging. Earlier this year, indications had been that this hotspot of biodiversity, featured in Jan. 1994's *National Geographic*, would be conserved. Now, the next group of timber merchants has managed to hatch a plan with a questionable "landowner" group for large scale industrial clearing of the lands adjacent to the mighty Sepik River, and its tributaries, for promised development. The Hunstein Range is one of the highest biodiversity priority areas in PNG and a proposed World Heritage site.

Glen Barry, Director of the US-based Ecological Enterprises, and former coordinator of the Rainforest Information Centre's PNG Campaign, comments: "This demonstrates the difficulty of 'saving' forest wilderness for any length of time. Meaningful economic activity that is not overtly degrading to the forest's ecology must be implemented for long term conservation to occur".

### For further information:

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# PNG and Investment ~ Who Benefits?

*Despite massive aid funding from Australia, and an allegedly strong economy, large numbers of people in PNG remain poor, uneducated and unemployed. Ongoing interference from foreign government and business interests are the root of the problem. IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes have provoked widespread unrest among ordinary people. The Australian government needs to listen to their demands and change their aid program so it meets the needs of the majority.*

by Lee Rhiannon

Officially, Papua New Guinea ceased being a colony of Australia's in September 1975. In the subsequent 20 years about \$9.1 billion (in 1994 dollars) in cash grants have gone to support the running costs of the Papua New Guinea government.<sup>1</sup> The federal government argues that this aid contribution "reflects the significance of the bilateral relationship".<sup>2</sup>

Australian companies have also targeted PNG, attracted by the rich reserves of gold, copper, oil and other resources. Last year it was estimated that Australian investments were about \$1.6 billion. Australia does very well out of our northern neighbour - PNG is our largest trade partner and biggest recipient of Australian business investment.<sup>3</sup>

**"It appears that aid dollars and hand-outs from companies have given PNG little more than a corrupt ruling elite"**

Economic, social and political crises are now rocking Papua New Guinea. With some of Australia's wealthiest companies, such as BHP and CRA, making huge profits from their PNG operations, it would appear that in 1975, rather than colonialism ending, another lot of masters took control.

But to listen to Australian politicians and the media, on the rare occasion when one can find a story about Papua New Guinea, the cause of the problem is always attributed to PNG. Laziness, mismanagement and corruption is how the PNG people and government are portrayed in Australia. Writing in the *Financial Review*, Rowan Callick recently declared "Papua New Guinea governments have been stuffing up for a decade or more."<sup>4</sup>

**Logging woes: Real  
corrupts are in govt  
Forest association  
slams TV program  
on logging in PNG  
Hire more nationals,  
loggers told**

**"the kernel of the PNG debacle is ongoing interference, by external government and business interests"**

The people of PNG have made it clear that past and current governments do bear considerable responsibility for the massive problems racking their nation. It would appear that both easy access to billions of dollars of aid money as well as hand-outs from companies have given PNG little more than a corrupt ruling elite of politicians, bureaucrats and business people.

But this is only part of the problem. The kernel of the PNG debacle is ongoing foreign interference by external

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Lee Rhiannon is a Director of AID/Watch, a Sydney-based organisation which monitors development aid spending.



government and business interests. More and more Papua New Guineans want to know how their country is going broke when foreign companies are taking out millions in profits each year?

Ironically, on the various standard economic indicators so beloved by economists, financial writers, and politicians PNG fares well. The *Pacific Islands Monthly*, in its July issue reported on the "strength of the PNG economy". In 1993 the economy grew by 14.4 percent - one of the highest growth rates in the region; and the kina, before it was floated last year, "was the strongest currency in the region" and "is still relatively stronger than the Australian and New Zealand dollars".<sup>5</sup>

But for the people of PNG this system is not working. Although Papua New Guinea is classified as a lower middle income country, its social indicators point to a real standard of living which is closer to that of a low income country. The adult literacy rate of 52 percent lags behind that of 75 percent for countries with similar per capita income.<sup>6</sup>

Infant mortality is unacceptably high at 57 per 1,000 live births. Only 20 percent of the urban population have access to safe water. Health services are stretched with nearly 13,000 people per doctor compared with 3,000 in countries with comparable incomes.<sup>7</sup>

Women suffer a particularly high level of discrimination. Their life expectancy is only 47 years.<sup>8</sup> PNG has one of the highest rates of maternal deaths. For women between 15 and 44 years childbirth and associated complications are the main cause of death. One out of every 22 rural mothers will die in pregnancy or childbirth.<sup>9</sup>

In the area of employment virtually no benefit has flowed onto Papua New Guineans from the multi-million dollar overseas investments. Only 0.3 percent of the population work in the field of mining, which generates 66 percent of PNG's export earnings.<sup>10</sup> Resources become profits that go straight out of the country.

In its first ten years of operations CRA made \$5.6 billion in profits from its Bougainville operations. The system in PNG has not been working for the majority of people for decades. Now many large corporations, that expect multi-million dollar profits from this resource rich country, are complaining that it is becoming too hard to do business in PNG. The World Bank and IMF have responded to their complaints with yet another Structural Adjustment Program

## Australian Support for World Bank/IMF Imposed Structural Adjustment Package

Papua New Guinea has been subject to Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank and IMF since 1989, when they were introduced in an attempt to compensate for the economic fallout from the Bougainville crisis.

In an embarrassing admission for the Australian government, which is constantly attempting to distance itself from the upheavals in PNG over land title, the *Post-Courier* has linked aid money from this country to the present attempts to change customary land ownership.<sup>11</sup>

The PNG Secretary of Lands has acknowledged that the PNG government in power in 1989 entered into a tripartite agreement with the Australian government and the World Bank to overhaul the Department of Lands and Physical Planning.<sup>12</sup> The Australian government came up with a \$9.1 million aid package for a five year program to facilitate the mapping of the country, and all the necessary changes within the department as well as the provision of capital works. This has been Australia's contribution to the Land Mobilisation program in PNG.<sup>13</sup>

With Australian companies keen to extend their investments in PNG, they have been strongly lobbying for changes to land ownership, in order to gain greater security. AusAID has heard these demands and recognises changes to land ownership as a priority to facilitate the large scale economic development it seeks to promote. In a major AusAID report on PNG released last year customary land arrangements were named as "detrimental to economic progress".<sup>14</sup> The difficulties investors in timber mills have in being internationally competitive because of land tenure problems was used to illustrate the need for urgent changes in the system of land ownership.<sup>15</sup>

This report in detailing aspects of the Land Mobilisation Program explains that the long-term objective "should be to survey and register all rural lands".<sup>16</sup> Australia's aid program to enable PNG to be mapped is the result. With the growing campaign across PNG against the moves to change customary land ownership the Australian government needs to listen to these demands and change their aid program so it meets the needs of the majority of people.

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# *Destruction of Shangri-La*

*The human rights abuses suffered by Tibet at the hands of Chinese communists has been well documented. But what's less well known - and what has potentially even larger ramifications, is the ongoing ecocide of the Tibetan environment.*

by Chris Doran

To those lucky enough to have visited it earlier this century, Tibet was regarded as "Shangri-La", a country renowned for its physical isolation, Buddhist mystique, and awe inspiring mountain wilderness. But to the Chinese on its eastern border, it was historically known as "Xizang" - western Treasure House. China had long coveted the vast resources lying within Tibet's Himalayan borders, and since invading the country in 1949 has treated the country much as an asset to be exploited.

### Fauna an Flora

Tibet's ecology was relatively undisturbed prior to Chinese occupation. Visitors commented on the vast herds of wild yak, ass and antelope of the high altitude prairies. "One great zoological garden" is how *National Geographic* magazine described it in 1930. "Wherever we looked we saw animals grazing contentedly". In the Himalayas which form the bulk of its Southern Border, the rare snow leopard enjoyed an extensive habitat. The giant and red pandas, as well as the Asiatic black bear and grey wolf are native to Tibet's eastern forests. Tibet covers an area four times the size of France, has an average altitude of over 4,500 metres and 25% of its flora is found nowhere else in the world.

### Chinese Occupation

Today much of Tibet's wildlife is facing extinction, with over 30 species officially listed as threatened or endangered. World renowned wildlife photographer Galen Rowell said of a 1981 trip to a remote part of Tibet: "For three weeks we walked - over 100 miles in total. We saw virtually nothing. The wildlife had disappeared".

Up until the 1970s, Chinese soldiers hunted herds of wild yak and antelope in machine gun mounted jeeps. The meat and furs were then shipped back to China. Poaching is widespread today; official bans are widely ignored. Despite an international effort to prevent its extinction, snow leopard pelts are openly sold in the markets of the Chinese populated centres of eastern Tibet. The government also openly solicits rich westerners for trophy hunting. The massive horned argali sheep is on offer for \$US 23,000.

Tibet has suffered major habitat destruction due to forced overgrazing. Livestock quotas are continually increased to



meet China's demand for meat. This has resulted in desertification, as well as major erosion and siltation problems in its rivers.

### Buddhist principles of ecology

The Dalai Lama - Tibet's spiritual and political leader - fled the Chinese occupation in 1959. Since then he has been a tireless crusader to create international awareness of the atrocities occurring in his homeland, both to its people and its environment. In the Tibet he knew, there was little need for formal environmental protection. In accordance with the Buddhist principles which governed all areas of Tibetan life, killing wildlife was strictly prohibited, as were any activities which upset the balance of living in harmony with the earth.

In *Seven Years in Tibet*, which describes Tibet prior to the Chinese occupation, Heinrich Harrier related working with Tibetans to construct a dyke to protect the capital of Lhasa from floods: "There were many interruptions and pauses. There was an outcry if anyone discovered a worm on a spade. The earth was thrown aside, work suspended, and the creature put in a safe place".



## Deforestation

Unfortunately for Tibet, the Chinese communists have not viewed the earth with the same philosophy. Tibet's forests have systematically been clear felled with little attempt at reforestation. Over 130,000 square kilometers of magnificent fir and conifer forests are now gone. According to official Chinese sources, more than \$US 54 billion worth of timber has been extracted. In recent years, tourists to eastern Tibet have commented on the long lines of Chinese Army trucks rumbling east with logs. The results have been loss of habitat for wildlife, major siltation of rivers, and the irreplaceable loss of some of the oldest forests left on the planet.

**"Seven of the major rivers of Asia originate in Tibet. They are the water source for 47% of the world's population"**

## International consequences

A tragedy, yes, but it is not a tragedy limited to the borders of Tibet and the suffering of its people. Seven of the major rivers of Asia originate in Tibet - the Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, Mekong, Salween and ironically, the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers. These rivers are the water source for 47% of the world's population. Due to the massive deforestation and soil erosion occurring upstream, they are the most heavily silted rivers in the world. According to a report issued by the Tibetan government in exile, deforestation in Tibet is responsible for the increasingly destructive flooding and silt deposition in the heavily populated areas of China, the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia. In the 1987-88 Indian floods, more than 35% of the flood waters came from the Brahmaputra River which originated in Tibet.

It is also believed the weather patterns throughout Asia are directly influenced by what happens on the Tibetan Plateau because of its immense altitude. Already the deforestation is believed to have significantly altered the monsoon cycle, which all of South East Asia depends on for rainfall and could possibly affect weather patterns as far away as North America.

## Nuclear presence

While Australians continue to express rage at the resumption of nuclear testing in French Polynesia, there has been little if any publicity of the nuclear device exploded by China in March of this year near the Tibetan border. Yet the implications of China's nuclear presence are tremendous. Should the major rivers which originate in Tibet become contaminated with radiation fallout or nuclear waste, the consequences would be catastrophic. Up to two billion people would be affected.

In a report released two years ago by the US-based International Campaign for Tibet, unregulated dumping of

radioactive nuclear waste on the Tibetan Plateau was confirmed. The Chinese Government has in the past approached other countries for contracts of dumping toxic waste in Tibet under conditions infinitely less stringent than those found in most industrialised nations. China has one quarter of their nuclear arsenal on the Tibetan Plateau, and has allegedly conducted chemical and biological warfare exercises there. Tibet also has the largest known uranium reserves in the world, which the Chinese have been quick to exploit despite the Tibetan Buddhist view that digging up the earth is a sacrilege. The country is rich in a number of other minerals which the Chinese have been ruthless in extracting, leaving ravaged pockmarks on the face of the one-time wilderness.

## Population transfer

By far the biggest threat to the Tibetan environment - as well as to the very existence of the Tibetan people - is the population transfer policy of the Chinese government. Present figures estimate there are already well over seven and a half million Chinese in Tibet versus six million Tibetans. The Chinese continue to build more roads, more air fields and more housing to bring in more and more Chinese. This means more forest will be clear felled, more minerals extracted, more waste dumped, more pollution. The government is desperate to establish the infrastructure to facilitate further Chinese immigration.

## Hope

Just as international outrage can influence the French government in the Pacific, so can international pressure influence Chinese policy in Tibet. The Chinese government suppresses all information concerning activities in Tibet, but the continued ravaging of this great and vast wilderness is an issue of international - not strictly Tibetan or Chinese - concern.

The best hope for Tibet is the return of the country to the Tibetan people. The Dalai Lama has urged that Tibet be declared a "Zone of Peace" where all military and nuclear practices would be banned and plant and animal life protected. Tibet would become the world's largest nature reserve. While unlikely to be implemented under the Chinese regime, the Dalai Lama's vision could be made a reality upon the return of his government.

His views on the environment extend beyond Tibet: "Peace and the survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities that lack commitment to humanitarian values...Our marvels of science and technology are matched, if not outweighed by many current tragedies...We have the capacity and the responsibility. We must act before it is too late".

## What You Can Do

**See Action Pages section on Tibet.**

*Source:* Reprinted from *Wilderness News*, Journal of The Wilderness Society, Australia.



# ACTION PAGES

## *The Power of the Pen.*

Politicians often calculate that every letter they receive represents the views of several hundred other people.

By spending a few minutes writing to the decision makers suggested in these pages, you will be taking effective action. Many letter campaigns have succeeded in the past. It is really worth it. Be brief. And be polite, however strongly you feel about the issue.

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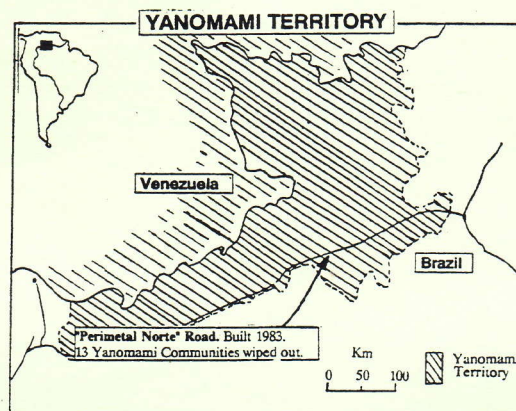
## THE AMAZON: Yanomami doomed?

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The Yanomamo (also spelled Yanoama or Yanomami) are the largest independent indigenous people of the world. In spite of the adverse effects from the outside, often brought in by explorers, missionaries, *garimpeiros* and soldiers, many groups still carry on their traditional lifestyle. Almost 300 villages with a total of about 18,000 inhabitants survive in a forested area shared between the Brazilian States of Amazonas and Roraima and the Venezuelan States of Amazonas and Bolivar. In Brazil the territory of these Indians has been heavily invaded, however. The main ethnocide took place in the last twenty years: Between 1974 (construction of the disastrous Perimetral Norte Highway) and 1993 (massacre in Haximu) the Yanomamo suffered greatly through illness, persecution and loss of habitat.

As a result, many Yanomamo groups left Brazil and looked for securer sites in Venezuela, where in spite of some hardship, the living conditons are still acceptable. Even this remote area is in danger, since the Venezuelan government, under the aged president Rafael Caldera, has proclaimed the Project for the "Sustainable" Development of the South (PRODESUR), which is intended to occupy the "underpopulated" indigenous regions of the South with colonists, thus "avoiding a geopolitical weakness" of that region.

The sad history of the Yanomami in Brazil now seems destined to be repeated in Venezuela. New roads and the asphaltting of the existing ones, are being planned. Fourteen river ports (one of them in Platanal within Yanomamo terri-



tory) shall be constructed and also various air strips. And what is even worse, nine "frontier towns" shall be established, two of which enclose Yanomamo villages. The forests where the Yanomamo live are being threatened both in Venezuela, and in Brazil, where the *Calha Norte* project is being recommenced. Bi-national agreements to "integrate" these development efforts make the situation more desperate.

### What You Can Do

The time to campaign against these detrimental projects is now or perhaps never. Please send a fax to: Dr. Rafael Caldera, President, Republic of Venezuela (+58 2/801 36 44), - asking him to reconsider the project in view of its ecological impacts and to respect the indigenous' territories. Apart from these protests, it is most important to prevent Brazil and Venezuela getting more funds for ventures which adversely affect the Yanomami. These funds could take the form of credit or aid, thus the lobbying of these potential creditors is vital to ensure that these destructive projects do not continue.

Source: This action alert was sent to WRR by Rudolf Dietrich of the Venezuelan NGO, CINECO (Centro de Investigacion e Informacion Ecologica)



## Georgia Pacific of US Kisses Off Guyana's Forests

*Georgia-Pacific has a long-standing concern for the quality of the environment in which we operate. We are committed to the health and safety of our employees and our communities.*

- "Good People Doing the Right Thing," Georgia-Pacific brochure

Georgia-Pacific Corporation may give lip service to environmentalism, but it's not living up to its high-minded words. Responding to pressure from environmental groups early in 1994, G-P pulled back from a proposal to buy Guyanese timber from Barama Company Limited.

Now, G-P has begun purchasing plywood from Barama's operations. Barama is a consortium of Korean and Malaysian companies with histories of destroying forests and mistreating their inhabitants.

Corporations like G-P routinely claim they're not accountable for what their contractors do in developing countries. This is often an excuse to shirk responsibility for the problems caused by their operations.

That's certainly the case for G-P's deal with Barama. The consortium has a 50-year license to log 4.1 million acres of northwest Guyana, equal to the land area of the entire state of Hawaii.

The Amerindian Peoples Association charges that the Guyanese government granted the concession on land traditionally worked by the Carib, Arawak and Warrau people. The government has ignored their claims.

What's more, Barama's huge concession has not been certified by an independent group authorized by the Forest Stewardship Council. Instead, G-P is seeking a green light from the industry-financed Tropical Forestry Foundation. And whatever standards might exist inside the concession, Barama is also buying logs from outside where there is no monitoring.

Stabroek News, the principal Guyanese newspaper, recently reported charges that Barama has engaged in transfer pricing. That's an illegal practice in which companies avoid paying taxes by selling materials to trading partners at artificially low prices.

Barama enjoys a ten-year tax holiday and pays almost no royalties to Guyana's government. Many Guyanese consider the contract invalid, because it was negotiated by a since-deposed dictatorship. The current, democratically elected government agreed early this year to review the original, 1991 contract, but has not yet done so. Meanwhile, for the Amerindian peoples of northwestern Guyana, the lure of short-term jobs in a plywood mill threatens to end their customary agricultural practices and make them dependent on the company to survive. When the timber is depleted, Barama and G-P will move on, leaving ecosystems devastated, biodiversity extinguished, and the local people bereft of their sustainable way of life.



Jocelyn Dow of the Guyanese group Red Thread says the people of Guyana welcome economic development, but it must benefit the local community, not fill the coffers of transnational corporations.

Rainforest Action Network executive director Randy Hayes adds: "In the new world economy of global exploitation, rainforest activists cannot allow corporations to operate as if their direct or indirect involvement in any country is 'just business'. Companies like G-P are not free from any social, environmental or economic accountability. They have primary responsibility to participate in the resolution of local issues and concerns."

G-P executives visited the Barama concession in late 1994 and asked for some improvements in timber practices. These may or may not be sufficient, but there's no indication whatever that G-P has addressed Amerindian land rights, Barama's woefully inadequate royalties to Guyana's government, or the charges of illegal pricing.

### **What You Can Do**

Activists must pressure multinationals like G-P into "doing the right thing." Please write G-P's CEO.

Sample Letter:

Mr. A.D. Carrell, Chairman and CEO Georgia-Pacific Center 133 Peachtree Street NE Atlanta, GA 30303 Fax: 404-584-1470

Dear Mr. Carrell,

As a customer of the Barama Company Limited, Georgia-Pacific has a responsibility to participate in the resolution of outstanding indigenous and environmental issues in Guyana. Even though G-P has made forest-management recommendations for the Barama concession, Barama is buying logs outside its concession, and Amerindian land claims have not been addressed.

Half measures will not work. Cosmetic field trips by industry-sponsored groups like the Tropical Forestry Foundation may polish G-P's image, but they do little to limit the damage of industrial forestry.

Live up to your environmental rhetoric! G-P must immediately stop importing Guyanese wood products from Barama until, at the very least:

- \* All indigenous issues are fully settled to the satisfaction of Amerindian peoples.

- \* Wood extraction is certified by Forest Stewardship Council standards.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Source: Rainforest Action Network's Action Alert 112, September 1995



## PERU: Occidental Petroleum Invades Candoshi Homeland

Occidental Petroleum Corp. has invaded the territory of the Candoshi people in northeastern Peru. Oxy drilled its first exploratory oil well on June 25, in spite of the group's rejection of oil-development activities on its land. Oxy continues to move forward with exploration, even though the Candoshi have voiced their formal objection to the project, are the traditional and legal landholders, and will be the population most directly affected by Oxy's activities.

The Candoshi number some 2,000 persons and live in the Morona and Tigre river basins of the Peruvian Amazon, holding title to only part of the 4,000 square miles of their traditional territory. The Candoshi have lived in relative isolation from the outside world and maintain a rich and traditional culture, depending on their rainforest home for their economic livelihood, social identity, and spiritual grounding. This fragile and biologically rich region is also habitat to many threatened and endangered species--such as the giant river otter, jaguar, and giant anteater--and contains over forty lakes, including the largest in the Peruvian Amazon, Lago Rimachi.

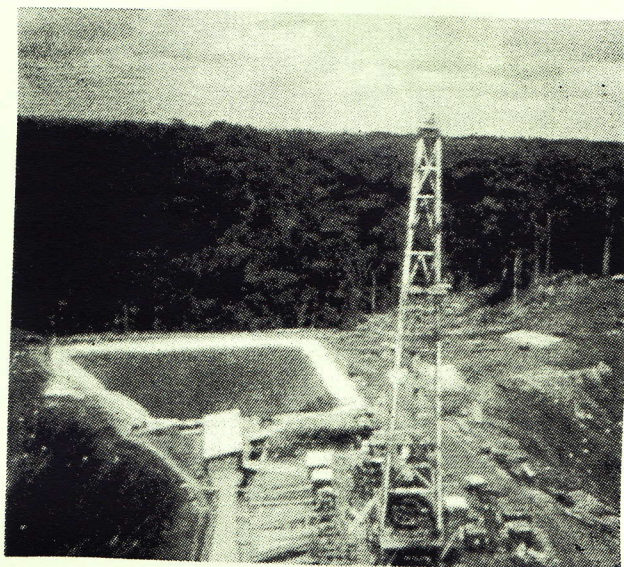
Oxy did seismic prospecting in late 1993 to determine the potential of the 2.2-million-acre "Block 4," an oil concession seven times the size of Los Angeles. Large parts of Block 4 lie within Candoshi land, and Candoshi communities and Oxy management agreed at that time on specific environmental measures to minimize any negative impacts on local populations. Candoshi leaders say Oxy did not fulfill these commitments.

In August 1994, Oxy notified the Candoshi that it would resume exploration activities on their land. The affected communities quickly organized a meeting, at which they unanimously voted to reject Oxy's return to the region.

They said neither their communities nor the environment they depend on could afford Oxy's presence, citing these critical reasons: the company's poor credibility, the region's ecological fragility, and the communities' dependence on river eco-systems which would inevitably be polluted with hydrocarbons and other toxic chemicals.

The Candoshi representative organization has denounced Oxy's plans as a direct violation of International Labor Organization Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. Peru is a signatory of the Convention, whose Article 15 declares:

In cases in which the State retains the ownership of mineral or sub-surface resources pertaining to lands, governments shall ... consult these peoples ... before undertaking or permitting any programs for the exploration or exploitation of such resources pertaining to their lands.



The Peruvian government did not consult the Candoshi about oil development on their territory before Oxy's previous prospecting activities, nor has it consulted them about current exploration plans.

The Candoshi are demanding negotiation on the social and environmental terms of operations in Block 4. The international community must take urgent action to help the Candoshi defend their rights and resources before it is too late.

Juan Chavez Munoz--president of AIDESEP, the national indigenous confederation--warns: "Oil companies have already been conceded 17 million acres of indigenous lands in the Peruvian Amazon. We can not allow indigenous peoples' voices to be quieted on this subject again."

Occidental Petroleum Corporation is one of the world's largest oil companies, producing oil and gas in 12 countries and exploring in 23. Corporate assets total nearly \$18 billion, with 1994 revenues reaching over \$9 billion. Peru is Oxy's largest foreign oil operation. Another Oxy concession in northeastern Peru produces 60,500 barrels of oil a day.

### What You Can Do

It's up to us to make Oxy's future in Peru depend on its responsiveness to the Candoshi! A victory for Candoshi human rights will strengthen the cause of other indigenous peoples in Peru who are confronting corporate activities on their land. Write to OXY, and urge it to respect the Candoshi's right to self-determination! Sample letter:

Dr. Ray R. Irani Chairman, President, and CEO Occidental Petroleum Corporation 10889 Wilshire Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90024-4201 Fax (310) 443-6922

Dear Dr. Irani:

I am writing to express my deep concern over Occidental's unwillingness to negotiate and reach an agreement with the Candoshi people, on whose land your Block 4 concession in Peru is located.

The Candoshi have lived and depended on this land for centuries, and Occidental's operations pose a serious threat to their economic, cultural, and physical well-being. Like all peoples, the Candoshi have the right to decide upon the future of their territory, resources and culture - rather than have those decisions made for them.

I respectfully urge you to respond to the Candoshi people's demands before advancing further on the Block 4 oil project.

Sincerely...



## UNITED STATES: Congress Declares War on Earth

The 104th United States Congress, dominated by "conservative" radical Republicans for the first time in 40 years, has launched an all-out attack on the environment and the US laws which protect it. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, recent legislation "is part and parcel of a giant national rummage sale, the effect of which will be to privatize, commercialize, pollute and consume America's natural heritage. It is a sell-out, pure and simple." The multinational corporations which now control Congress via lobbyists and huge donations are trying to topple every statute which stands in the way of all-out resource exploitation. By donating millions of dollars to the election campaigns of conservative candidates, timber, mining, and other development industries have gained access to Congress. Thousands of industry lobbyists invade Capitol Hill daily, while industry lawyers are actually writing legislation which is rapidly introduced as bills before Congress.

Anti-environmental forces in Congress claim they have a "mandate from the people" but polls show the public is more committed than ever to protecting the environment. With such laws on the books as the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*, *National Environmental Policy Act* and the *Clean Water Act*, the US has been a global leader in conservation legislation. Every environmental law and every acre of public land is now threatened by right-wingers who would completely deregulate industry and turn all public lands over to corporate plunderers. Major blows to the environment are already being signed into law by a weak-spined President Clinton. The "logging without laws" amendment has become law, meaning a huge increase in logging on public lands and suspension of all environmental laws which regulate this logging. In addition, a moratorium on listing of species under the ESA has been imposed until Sept. 30, 1996.

This crisis has profound implications for the global environment. US public lands are major refuges of biodiversity, housing a wide range of sensitive species, including many migratory birds. Accelerated development could mean extinction of internationally significant species such as the grizzly bear and the bison. Laws such as the *Endangered Species Act* and the *Marine Mammal Protection Act* protect species around the world by allowing for sanctions against countries which trade in threatened species.

Here's a sampler of some of the bills recently introduced into Congress: 1) Idaho Senator Larry Craig's S. 391 would create "extraction zones" on public lands where citizen involvement and environmental reviews would be severely curtailed 2) New Mexico Senator Pete Domenici's *Livestock Grazing Act (S. 852)* would turn over management of livestock grazing on public lands to the livestock industry. The bill would end public involvement in grazing decisions and require that public lands be managed to increase livestock production to the exclusion of other uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat. 3) The Alaska delegation's S.1054 would gut the hard-won *Tongass Timber Reform Act* of 1990 and return Alaska to the days when the timber industry held a "timber first" priority use over other users of America's largest, wildest national forest (the Tongass). Many permanently protected roadless areas would be opened to logging, and an impossibly high annual cut (418 million board feet!!) would be imposed on the Tongass. 4) H.R. 1745 and S. 884 endanger protected wilderness areas nationwide by undermining



the longstanding provisions of the *Wilderness Act* of 1964. 5) Alaska Rep. Don Young's H.R. 1675 would weaken management of the National Wildlife Refuge system and encourage more harmful exploitation of the refuges. 6) Washington Senator Slade Gorton's S. 768 would "reform" the *Endangered Species Act* by allowing the government to plan for the extinction of species. The bill, like many now before Congress, was written by lawyers for the timber, mining, and development interests. 7) Rep. Shuster's H.R. 961 would gut the *Clean Water Act* by allowing states to decide that lakes and rivers are not worth cleaning up, and require complex, lengthy review of all existing rules. 8) S. 605, the "takings" bill, would demand that if any health, safety, or environmental protection inhibits corporate profits or developers property values, taxpayers must compensate the developer for revenue decreases. 9) Utah Representative James Hansen's H.R. 2032 would give all 232 million acres of federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land over to the states. 10) Jesse Helms of North Carolina has vowed to block ratification of the International Biodiversity Treaty.

Many similar proposals are brewing, such as transferring management of the new Mojave National Preserve from the Park Service back to the more development-oriented BLM; a five year moratorium on acquisition of any new land for national parks, wildlife refuges or forests; and selling off existing national parks and forests to private developers. Under the guise of "balancing the budget," (eliminating the massive federal deficit), Congress is planning to open such sacred lands as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to developers.

### What You Can Do

NOW is the time for a global outcry against the demolition of conservation in the US. PLEASE contact President Clinton and the US Embassy or Consulate in your country and express your dismay and outrage at the plundering of America's natural wonders. Let them know how much you enjoy traveling to the US to visit wild places and that, until now, you have regarded the US as a global leader in conservation law. Protest actions at embassies and consulates would be very welcome indeed.

President Bill Clinton, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20500 USA phone (202) 456-1111 fax (202) 456-2461 E-mail: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

For more information: Native Forest Network, PO Box 6151, Bozeman, MT 59711-6151 USA phone/fax (406) 585-9211 E-mail [nfn@igc.apc.org](mailto:nfn@igc.apc.org) Thanks to the Western Ancient Forest Campaign, Endangered Species Coalition, and Jim Morris Environmental T-Shirt Co.



## TIBET: Onslaught on Tibetan Environment

The Human rights abuses suffered by the Tibetan people at the hands of the Chinese invaders have been well publicised. Less well known, but even more serious in its implications, is the ongoing destruction of the Tibetan environment. Wildlife and forests have been decimated. Rivers which originate in Tibet are the water sources for 47% of the world's population. Flooding and siltation downstream is resulting from ecological abuse in Tibet. (See article, "The Destruction of Shangri-La" in this edition of WRR.)

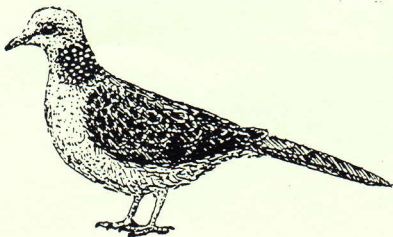


### What You Can Do

- \* **Contact Eco Tibet**, an international organisation dedicated to saving Tibet's environment.  
In Australia, Eco Tibet is part of the **Australia Tibet Council**.  
PO Box 1236, Potts Point, NSW 2011. Ph (02) 360 9669 Fax: 360 9057
- \* **Write to Li Peng**, Premier of the People's Republic of China, expressing your outrage at China's devastation of Tibet.  
His address: 9 Xihuangohenngenbeiji, Beijingshi 100032, Republic of China
- \* **Do the same to the Chinese Ambassador** in your country. In Australia: Hua Jundo, PRC Australian Ambassador, 15 Coronation Drive, Yarralumla 2600
- \* **In Australia, a conference on the ecological situation in Tibet** is tentatively planned for Sydney in September next year. The Dalai Lama will be in Australia at that time and may speak at the conference. For further information, contact Chris Doran, c/- The Wilderness Society, 53 Liverpool St., Sydney, NSW 2000. Ph; 02 552 2355

*Note: In the UK, the Tibet Support Group UK, 9 Islington Green, London N1 2XH, campaigns on Tibetan Human Rights Issues*

According to the Human Rights Group, Tibet Support UK, Tibetan Political Prisoners have been released as a result of public campaigns.



## THE WORLD: McDonald's & the McLibel Trial

(See article, "Guess Who's on Trial Now?", in this WRR). The libel trial brought by McDonald's against two unwaged London Greenpeace supporters is expected to last until well into 1996. You can help the campaign against McDonald's attempt to hide the truth about its operations.

### What You Can Do

- \* Please make a donation and/or raise money for the McLibel Campaign. Funds are needed for: fares for witnesses, administration and other costs. Plus, 35,000 pounds to pay for transcripts of the trial, since McDonald's has broken a promise to provide the Defendants with transcripts.  
Donations to McLibel Support Campaign (c/o 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX, UK).
- \* **Free Speech Pledge** - Free Speech is our right. The McLibel Support Campaign calls on all concerned and campaigning organisations to defy libel threats and to freely circulate anti-McDonald's literature, whatever the verdict of the Trial. Over a million leaflets have already been handed out since the writs for this case were served. Censorship and intimidation must never be allowed to succeed.
- \* **Kids Against Big Mac** - all kids everywhere are encouraged to set up their own KABM groups - PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU, UK
- \* **Back the Support Network for McDonald's Workers**. This is a network providing and encouraging solidarity among their workers c/o 56 Clarence Rd., London E5, UK.
- \* **Spread the word**. Please circulate details of the trial to members, affiliates and related organisations  
Note: The McLibel Support Campaign supports, but is independent from worldwide campaigns against McDonald's. KABM and the Support Network for McDonald's Workers are not part of the McLibel Support Campaign

Copies of the "What's Wrong with McDonald's?" leaflet are available from Greenpeace (London), 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DX ph. 071 837 7557

I/We back the McLibel Support Campaign and the Free Speech Pledge  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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I/We enclose a donation. (Cheques to McLibel Support Campaign, C/o 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX, Tel/Fax 0171 713 1269)



## AUSTRALIA: Cape York Peninsula: The land needs its people

In the north east tip of Australia, the future of Cape York Peninsula, one of the last great indigenous wilderness areas on earth, hangs in the balance. With the Peninsula on the brink of being sub-divided for development and exploited for mining and pastoralism, the Queensland Government stepped in and promised a 1200 km conservation zone along the eastern coastline. The region is now gaining recognition for its extraordinary natural and cultural values, and support is growing to protect this key area by returning it to its traditional custodians to manage.

Cape York Peninsula is a mysterious place for most Australians. In an area the size of Victoria, landscapes of stunning coast lines, monsoonal rainforests, heathlands, wetlands, savannah woodlands and 21 river systems remain relatively unspoilt due to remoteness and a tropical climate.

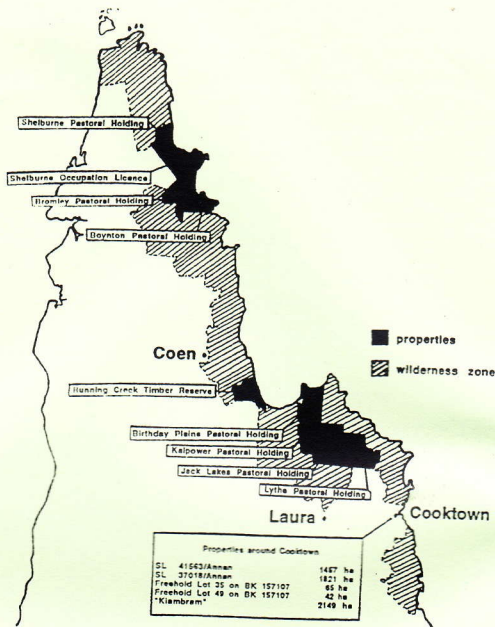
Reflecting the diverse ecosystems found in the Peninsula, the region is rich in species including some unique to the area, such as the beautiful endangered Golden Shouldered Parrot. Fascinating species, such as Australia's own Birds of Paradise and the Spotted Cus Cus provide us with an ecological link to Papua New Guinea. Over 60% of Australia's own butterflies and freshwater fish are found in the Peninsula. The tropical seas surrounding the region are also of international significance for seagrass meadows, dugong and green turtles.

What singles out this region and distinguishes it as an exceptional environment is the diverse thriving indigenous cultures which have survived despite a 150-year history of dispossession. Aboriginal people keep their culture alive through stories, song and dance that tell of how the land was created and how to care for the country. Here, life is based on partnership with the land.

For indigenous people it is essential that Cape York Peninsula remains an unspoilt environment. They rely on the productivity of natural systems like forests, reefs and wetlands. Here bush food and medicine are still gathered, traditional arts and crafts produced, over 50 languages spoken and elders continue to teach and guide their communities.

As Michael Winer, Campaigner for Cape York Indigenous Environment Foundation explains, "Though forcibly removed, some in chains, to Aboriginal reserves, the people have never lost their desire to return home. They want to go home and continue their role as custodians of the land. It is critical that they once again own and manage their own land. The land needs its people and the people need their land".

The Cape York Indigenous Environment Foundation was recently formed to spearhead the complementary objectives of environmental protection and land justice. Described as an "historic black-green alliance", the Foundation is



MAP OF CAPE YORK PENINSULA SHOWING THE PROPOSED WILDERNESS ZONE WITH PROPERTIES TO BE ACQUIRED UNDER THE GOSS ELECTION PROMISE

working as a formal structure for cooperation between traditional owners, the Cape York Land Council, Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society.

The Foundation is focusing on raising money and awareness of Cape York Peninsula with the aim of acquiring Peninsula properties of cultural and ecological significance. The land will then be returned to the traditional Aboriginal custodians to own and manage.

"The Foundation is supportive of a recent Queensland Government plan to turn the east coast of Cape York Peninsula into a conservation zone, provided the state government recognises and accepts that any nature conservation strategy in the region must recognise the rights of and encourage the involvement of traditional owners" said Michael.

The Queensland Government's plan is to spend \$25.7 million over the next five years to acquire 775,000 hectares of eastern Peninsula coastline, stretching from the Daintree River to the tip of the Peninsula. The conservation zone will include islands, sea areas, and 3.6 million hectares of magnificent hinterland.

The Goss plan will be effective if it is based on Aboriginal land ownership. These promises offer to consolidate the territory and cultures of the eastern seaboard of Cape York Peninsula. They would enable Aboriginal land justice to be achieved within years rather than decades and Aboriginal elders should be able to see a resolution in their lifetime.

### What You Can Do

The support of the wider community is critical if the Foundation is going to succeed. Many Cape York Peninsula properties are for sale now and money needs to be raised urgently in order to return the land to its Aboriginal custodians. If you would like to save Cape York Peninsula's cultural and environmental heritage, send your donation to:

Cape York Indigenous Environment Foundation, PO Box 2496, Cairns 4870. For more information please ring the Foundation on 070 519 077 or 1800 623 548 (free call in Queensland).



## PHILIPPINES: Mining Law Threatens Tribal Lands in New Gold Rush

*President Fidel Ramos has signed into law a new Mining Code giving companies freedom to devastate tribal lands.*

In its desperation to attract foreign investors, the debt-ridden Philippine government has abandoned any pretence of caring about tribal land rights.

The Code offers some of the most favourable terms to corporate investors found anywhere in the world. Multinationals were even asked to help draft the Code. But affected communities - mostly tribal peoples who live on mineral rich land - were not consulted. It is they whose land and lives are now under threat.

There are 10 million tribal people in the Philippines, nearly 15% of the total population. They live in every region of the country. The Igorot, from the Cordillera region north of Luzon, are noted for their beautiful and intricate rice terraces. These could now be destroyed by pollution from open cast mines.

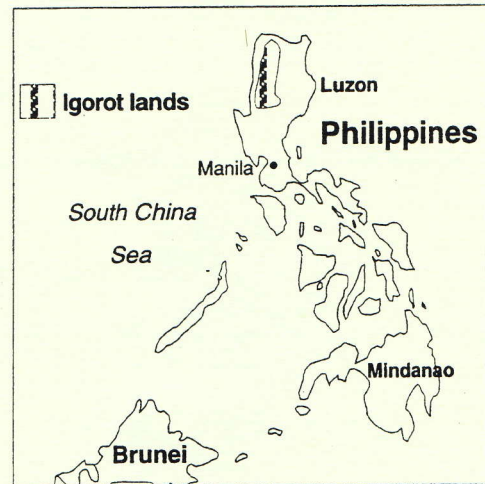
Open cast mines are already a threat to health. Breathing difficulties have doubled among the Igorot since Bebguet Corp.'s new sites were installed. Water is too polluted for washing in and noxious fumes escape from processing plants.

Commercially, the most important minerals are gold, copper and chromite. Cyanide and other toxic chemicals are involved in gold extraction. Many of the miners are tribal people who are forced by poverty to work long and dangerous hours underground.

The Philippine government has repeatedly shown that it has no respect for tribal peoples' land rights. The *Small Scale Mining Act* of 1991 did not recognise their rights to ancestral lands despite the fact that in 1987, when the constitution was revised, foreign control of mining was limited to 40%. Now 100% foreign ownership is allowed. Companies also have the right to displace and resettle people within their "concessionary areas", and environmental regulations are disastrously lax. Profit is now more important than human life.

The Igorot have their own long-established mining practices which are completely different from those of the invading multi-nationals. The right to dig a tunnel is granted by the elders. No dangerous chemicals are used and the gold ore is shared in the community.

Up to 100,000 of the one million Igorot gain significant benefits and supplements to their livelihood from this small-scale mining - many more than are employed by the companies. Small-scale mining has proved to be environmentally sound and far more sustainable than the "modern" wage slavery imposed by foreign companies in the name of the global



economy.

In its eagerness to attract foreign investors, the government seems to have forgotten not only its responsibility to its citizens, but its own constitution. Any attempt to transform the 1987 recognition of land rights from a paper document into a human reality has been blocked by Congress. Meanwhile, numerous laws which directly contradict this constitutional commitment have passed swiftly into the statute books.

Despite the constitution, and despite the importance of small-scale mining to tribal peoples, the government - in collusion with international "development" institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund - has turned its back on sustainable development projects and strongly backed the policy of economic growth through free access and foreign investment. In a sense, this is not surprising, given that the Philippines has a massive debt of \$39 billion. But the Igorot and other tribal peoples did not make that debt, so why should they be the ones to pay the cruellest price?

Tribal peoples in the Philippines are determined to beat the multinationals. With your support now, they can win.

### What You Can Do

Please write a polite letter to:

\* The Honourable Victor Ramos, Secretary, Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, Elipical Rd., Quezon City, Metro-Manilla, Philippines.

\* The Honourable Jose de Venecia, Speaker, House of Representatives, Batasan Hills, Quezon City, Metro-Manilla, Philippines

Make the following points:

- \* Legislation guaranteeing collective rights of tribal peoples to their lands is the highest priority. No new concessions should be granted on tribal land until the legislation is complete.
- \* The Govt. should ban all destructive mining operations
- \* The Mining Code (RA 7942) should be repealed.
- \* Tribal communities should participate in the formulation of all laws and agreements affecting their lands.

Source: Urgent Action Bulletin of Survival International, August 1995  
For more details about the mining companies and how to stop them contact Survival International, 11-15 Emerald St., London WC1N 3QJ, UK



## ECUADOR: Texaco refuses to disclose work plan

After two decades of exploiting oil reserves deep in the Ecuadorian Amazon, US-based oil company Texaco withdrew from the country in 1992. In response to calls for Texaco to be made accountable for massive environmental damage associated with its operations, an agreement was struck in May 1995 between the company and the Ecuadorian government.

The agreement detailed how Texaco was to clean up the mess it had made. Under the terms of the agreement, Texaco promises to close all existing production ponds it left behind, reinject production water and finance reforestation projects, schools, health clinics, river ambulances, and sewage and water systems.

However, local environmental and indigenous organisations have denounced the agreement on the grounds that it is too limited in its scope, offers no guarantee that the best technology will be used and allows no input from the affected communities.

A \$US 1.5 billion law suit has been filed in New York on behalf of 30,000 Ecuadorian residents, alleging Texaco acted with "callous disregard for the health, well-being and safety of the plaintiffs", and that "large-scale disposal of inadequately treated hazardous wastes and destruction of tropical rainforest habitats, caused harm to indigenous peoples and their property".

The San Francisco-based Rainforest Action Network (RAN) claims that Texaco spilled a total of 17 million gallons of crude oil into the environment. In comparison, the Exxon Valdez spilled 10.8 million gallons in Alaskan waters in 1989. RAN has been at the forefront of international efforts to support local groups campaigning for Texaco to be made accountable.

A RAN update (October 1995) stated:

While sending out yet another round of PR letters stating "the public [will be] able to view the responsible approach we are taking to the remediation", Texaco meanwhile refuses to disclose the very information necessary to evaluate the remediation planned. Texaco also refuses to provide for independent oversight once the cleanup has begun.

### What You Can Do

\* Fax CEO Alfred C de Crane today and tell him the public demands independent monitoring of Texaco's remediation in Ecuador, and to release the work plan immediately.  
Fax: +1 914 253 7753

\* Boycott Texaco, stage protests at Texaco stations or offices, lobby large Texaco shareholders to take a stand on the issue. Contact RAN for more information.

RAN, 450 Sansome, #700 San Francisco, CA 94111, USA  
ph: +1 415 398 4404 fax: +1 415 398 2732 email: amazonia@apc.igc.org

## CANADA: Nuxalk Blockaders Arrested

On Sept. 26 1995, police descended on the Nuxalk Nation and activists from the Forest Action Network who had been blockading an International Forest Company (INTERFOR) logging site on King Is. near Bella Coola and sitting in trees since September 5. At least 14 people were arrested and flown 200 miles to Vancouver to face charges of contempt. All but four have been released from jail after signing conditional release forms. Three Hereditary Chiefs and a member of the First Nations Environmental Network are refusing to sign the form of terms of release and therefore will remain in jail until at least their next court date of October 16. In explaining their refusal to sign, the Chiefs said: "We have a responsibility for this land and territory. We cannot sign a paper that would mean we could no longer care for this land". The Chiefs will not enter into any land claims because "we do not need to go to anyone and request or seek a claim to this land. It is our territory".

### What You Can Do

Fax letters today to:

\* BC Supreme Court. Fax: 604 660 2420

\* BC Premier Mike Harcourt.

Fax: 604 387 0087 email: Premier <cmerkley@galaxy.gov.bc.ca>

\* Prime Minister Jean Chretien, House of Parliament, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Fax: +1 613 941 6900

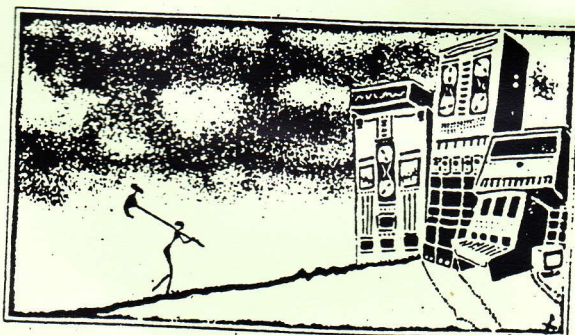
Send copies of your letters to:

Nuxalk Nation Office, House of Smayusta, PO Box 8, Bella Coola, BC V0T 1C0, Canada Fax: 604 79 5707

Sample letter (make changes):

I am greatly distressed to hear that members of the Nuxalk Nation from Bella Coola have been arrested for contempt of court. This charge is the result of their actions to prevent logging on their traditional territory.

We urge you to look at the larger picture in this case. The Nuxalk Nation never signed any treaties with Canada or BC giving away this land. They are a sovereign nation and hold title to the land which INTERFOR wishes to log. They are protecting the forest which has sustained the Nuxalk Nation for generations. They are protecting an environment with rich biodiversity. What is INTERFOR doing? Who is the criminal here? Please act now. Please do all within your power to stop all logging on Nuxalk Territory. Sincerely,





# To Walk Upon The Earth...

by Garrick Martin

**W**e, the human peoples of the Earth, particularly those of us of the Machine Nations, have a sickness. We know that we are ill, but we are afraid of what the cure may be, so we hold out another day, gripping our heads, clutching our stomachs, ignoring that burning feeling behind the eyes.

China was once a huge wilderness; now, nearly one third desert.

Africa was once a land of forests, elephants, and spears; not deserts, ivory, tanks.

North America - Great Turtle Island - once the home of buffalo, wolves, wild grasses, bears, ancient forests.

Australia was home to the kangaroo people, rainforest and old growth forest stretched up one entire coast, while the red dust land was trodden only by the soft pads of the dingo, the wallaby, not the hard heels of cattle.

And England, poor England, so far removed from its original self, now choked with people, cars, 'for sale' signs.

Yes, we have a sickness, and it is old. Once, when we were few, the damage was less. But we have spread, infecting all corners of the globe, converting those who were in peace with the Earth to our ways, our law, and now there is no new world to discover, nowhere new to colonise and exploit, and we find ourselves standing on a very fragile planet, wondering how we ever got ourselves into this mess.

One-third to one-half of the world's forests have been destroyed over the last 2000 years. Forty hectares (100 acres) of tropical rainforest are destroyed every minute. Conservative estimates put species extinction at 20,000 a year. It could be more. Since 1955, the human population of the world has tripled to 5.5 billion. Studies show that in high latitudes, in the Northern hemisphere, total ozone has decreased by up to 35% from 1979 values. A recent state-funded report in Russia showed that 75% of its water is polluted.

Looking about us, even at the limited coverage that the mainstream press gives to environmental matters, it is very clear that we are in the grip of an ecological crisis, a situation so dire that it is beyond any comparison to previous experience. What may not be so apparent, on initial inspection, is that it is

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**Garrick Martin** works at the Rainforest Information Centre, Lismore. This essay won a national prize for young writers and has been published in *Simply Living* magazine.



not a crisis of the physical realm, but rather a chronic psychological disturbance, one that has seen one species out of millions on this planet turn in on itself and the mother that sustains it.

Long ago we gave up ourselves ... We have traded our real existence, our real feelings for a delusion ... We deny all evidence at hand that this civilisation, which has shaped our minds, is also destroying the Earth. (Susan Griffin)

The process that has brought us to this point has been long in the making. Amongst the many creation myths in the human cultures of Earth, the creation of the scientific, materialistic, capitalist, patriarchal, machine world view is perhaps the most mythical of all. For centuries, we made use of Nature not only to feed, clothe, and shelter us, but also as the basis for culture and spirituality. And then, out of this relationship grew fantasies of how we (or, most often, men) might mould Nature, reshape it, transform it into a new world whose sole purpose was to 'serve' human beings. This dominant world view is entrenched in the systematic, Cartesian view that underlies science and economics, and holds the absurd notion that infinite growth on a finite planet is possible. It was during the Age of Enlightenment that the long held concept of a world explicitly here for human use became not only a physical process, but a very specific philosophy of justified exploitation. As Francis Bacon expressed it, the Earth was a commodity, "it may be mastered, managed, and used in the service of human life." This attitude was obviously one held by the early colonisers, who exploited land and people with a rapaciousness that, were they alive, would see Cortez or Captain Cook quickly



elected to the Board of Directors of the World Bank or any of today's expansive Multinational Companies.

We who are born into this civilisation have inherited a habit of mind. We are divided against ourselves. We no longer feel ourselves to be a part of this earth. (Corinne Kuma D'Souza)

We are suffering from our definitions of 'environment'. We have become removed from the reality that surrounds us, so much so that we have forgotten what the world really looks like. Even what was formerly one of our closest ties to the Earth, food, has become a sterile entity; pre-wrapped in plastic, bound in cardboard, and seldom resembling the unprocessed life form it originally was. Food is now a commodity, to be bought and sold, a package to be consumed no differently to the rest of the material world. Standing apart from the reality that surrounds them, most people do not recognise, let alone give thanks for, the air that passes their lips each moment. As Susan Griffin has said, "This is a mind in exile from its own wisdom".

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The scientific approach  
attempts to alter the way we act,  
rather than the way we think.

We are seeking answers  
in the very paradigm from which these  
problems are derived.

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Current scientific thought has come round to the realisation (and it is a realisation that the 'primitive' cultures have tried to share with us for some time), that all life is connected, that to hurt the Earth we hurt ourselves. But now, faced with this evidence of a massive error of judgement, we find that the institutions of exploitation are so much the basis of 'civilisation' that we are finding it incredibly hard to change, to slow this runaway machine. The scientific approach to the environmental crisis is often an attempt to moderate or alter the way we act, rather than the way we think. Using the systematic, reductionist approach to viewing nature, we are seeking answers in the very paradigm from which these problems are derived.

How often do we witness the ineffectiveness of quota systems on fishing, when what is lacking is simple respect for nature, or the failure of economic incentives to encourage pollution 'control'? Take, for example, the quest to name and classify all living things, a standard by which human endeavour is to be judged. We cannot "save" a species, until we have sufficiently dissected that life form into its composite parts. We cannot create a nature reserve, to protect a particular area from our own ravages, until we have classified all the animals, plants, minerals etc, that live in that place. The flaw in this method is that it excludes life that is not quantified as such - the



rocks, the waves, the breath of the deep sea swell. Nature exists on its own, of its own right. With or without human observation and interaction the natural world continues to be. By viewing nature through intellectual binoculars, we fail to see what is really before us, and we also fail to see the true beauty of life as it is. In training young people in the patterns and systems of objectification that is science, we are turning the naturally inquisitive human mind into a mechanical processor of data. Where students of science have been thoroughly immersed in a worldview which excludes all we cannot name or find suitable metaphors for, they have been deprived of their birthright, that right of all living beings, to experience spiritual awareness all about them, to sit still as the frogs and rocks do, and just breathe it in; without needing labels for what we witness or feel, no carefully choreographed reactions - just simple, first hand appreciation of the deeply spiritual world we are immersed in.

The failure of scientific thought to effect real change in the face of this crisis is clearly shown in the processes surrounding World Heritage listings and National Parks. In many countries of the world, National Parks are made up primarily of mountainous, un-loggable, un-minable terrain. Take the example of the United States' oldest National Park, Yellowstone, areas of which have been transformed into the equivalent of a drive-in theatre, where human beings and cars are the most prolific species, and where the wild bison that migrate each year down to their winter feeding grounds, outside the





park, are shot by ranchers as they cross into private property. Wild beings can't read maps, and the concept of private property is a very recent, human invention, one that is the underlying cause of much of the destruction wrought upon the Earth.

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"Unless we address the root causes, such as our belief that human beings can own a piece of the Earth, then we are merely engaged in stalling tactics"

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While it may be comforting to think that there are many wild places "locked up" in reserves, it is clear that in many areas, where resources are becoming increasingly scarce, the pressure to mine or log in National Parks will increase. Unless we address the root causes, such as our belief that human beings can own a piece of the Earth, then we are merely engaged in stalling tactics. The coupling of modern physics, with its focus on the inter-connectedness of all life and the chaos that is its base, tied to the ancient wisdom of the First Peoples can help to dispel this myth. The biggest challenge that the new breed of scientists face, however, is to break the pattern of looking too closely, and instead focus out to a simpler, more holistic view.

When you look at what is happening to our world ... it becomes clear that unless you have some roots in a spiritual practice that holds life sacred and encourages joyful communion with all your fellow beings, facing the enormous challenges ahead becomes nearly impossible.  
( Joanna Macy)

Right now, as you are reading this, there is a conference

taking place somewhere, on some aspect of the environmental crisis, whether it be the greenhouse crisis, the population crisis, the biodiversity crisis... And nearly all will be lengthy discussions on how to deal with the symptoms. It would seem that very few people are comfortable with talking about the cause.

Our concept of 'spiritual' has been transformed over the past few thousand years to be an intellectual process, rather than a simple experience. To be spiritually aware is to witness life, right here, now, regardless of dogmas or theories. When you feel the wind blowing against your skin, you are one with that wind. When you stand in awe of a thousand year-old tree, a forest ancestor, you feel the spiritual essence that flows through everything, whether it be called God or Goddess, Krishna or Gaia, it matters not, as long as we experience communion with life. Just as a child stands fascinated with a shell to their ear, listening to the sound of the ocean, so can we stand in awe to the sound of the Earth, a music that surrounds us completely, that carries us forward whether we are aware of it or not.

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Without 40 nights in the desert wilderness, who knows what the prophet Jesus would have taught?

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Rather than new religions, or new twists on old tunes, we just need to dwell on that which we inherently know. And whether you study the teachings of Jesus, or Buddha, the Pagans or the Lakota Indians, we must remember that all these people gathered insight and wisdom from the natural world. It was with the Bodhi tree that the Buddha became enlightened, and without 40 nights in the desert wilderness, who knows what the prophet Jesus would have taught. For this reason, we all need to protect life, for it is through such action that we find out who we are. What is needed now is for all of us to act; to seek out the knowledge that is compounded in our bones and flowing in the oceans of our blood, and then act on that. It is a fairly common perspective in our hectic life-styles to assume that 'there are people dealing with it', and that it is OK to just recognise the problem but hope that someone else fixes it up. If we are going to change our ways, then it is up to each and every one of us. Environmental activism is not a specialist task, it is just simple day to day awareness of your actions. The eleventh century Chinese poet, Su T'ung p'o wrote that, "The sound of the valley stream is itself the Vast Eternal Tongue." But in an era where water is now brought to us by a tap, or purchased in plastic bottles from a supermarket, many people are no longer aware of what a wild stream actually looks like. What we have forgotten is that the places we live are still made up of this Earth. Inner city roads and buildings are only reconstituted rock, mixed with a little beach and water, the cars being moulded ore and ground minerals.

As Henry Thoreau put it, "we borrow from the forest the boards which shelter and sticks which warm us." And so,



while you may not be aware of it as you rush from your home to the bus stop, from bus stop to office, you are being sung to. All the while you dodge and slide through the streets where you live, the Vast Eternal Tongue is whispering its secrets, trying to teach the 'deaf' where once stood humble pupils.

"As you rush from bus stop to office, you are being sung to"

Those living in urban areas should be aware that we place ourselves, and our children, in an extremely harsh environment. With the barrage of stimuli, misinformation, industrial noise, and plain horror that we surround our young people, it is little wonder that we now have a generation that has, in adapting to this hostile environment, learnt to experience the world in a very hostile way. In fact, would we dare to add up the violence committed directly or indirectly on the children of an average city, we would come to the conclusion that it is nothing less than child abuse, on a grand scale. And, as we are finding, those who are abused go on to abuse others, or to silently abuse themselves.

What we need is a healing. The abused child in all of us needs to speak up, to speak out. And we need to articulate our grief at the damage that our culture has wrought upon Life. As the Zen Buddhist practitioner, Thich Nhat Hahn, has so eloquently put it: "We need to hear within us the sound of the Earth crying."

There has been a wealth of thought, written and acted out, over the past few decades. Ecological awareness has not only presented itself in the writings of ecofeminism, deep ecology, the neo-pagans, the gaia hypothesis, and much more, but is also finding a footing, once again, in the major, established religions. Whatever your personal beliefs, it is clear that the time to act is now, because we, as a world, have never been here before. There is no new place to run to, and technology will not save us. We will just have to deal with the truth. And the truth starts, like all journeys, with a single step. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, "The real miracle is not to walk upon water... but to walk on the Earth."

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## The RIC\VDT EcoHome Project - PNG:

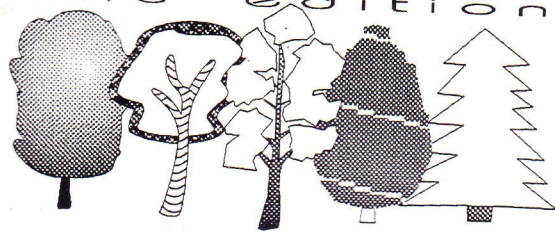
In August 1995, the Eco-home Project, a joint project of the Rainforest Information Centre and Village Development Trust (VDT -- our PNG partner organisation), began in Morobe province, Papua New Guinea. The project, which had been discussed and planned for a couple of years, centres around the villages of Sapa and Bau, near the Lae base of VDT. RIC associate Karsten Light travelled to Morobe province to undertake the task of supervising the construction of three buildings in each of the villages. Two are to be houses, the other a communal building.

The aim of the project is:

- a) to provide first hand expertise in methods of building construction using techniques previously unknown to the villagers, so that they will be able to make better use of the locally milled ecotimber that they are producing,
- b) to improve the housing standards of the villagers, especially regarding moquito-proofing their homes for health purposes.

Other aspects of building design are being taught to the assistant builders, all local people, many being youths in need of training. One example is promoting the use of bamboo guttering and methods for collecting and saving rainwater. To date the project is going well, with Karsten expected home in a couple of months.

## THE NEW SOUTH WALES Good Wood Guide The Sustainable & Responsible Use of Timber 2nd edition



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If you would like to be notified when the new Guide is ready, please contact:

**Rainforest Information Centre**

p.o. box 368 Lismore 2480 ph: 066 218 505 fx: 066 222 339 email: peg@rainfor



# FSC: Timber Labelling You Can Trust

*The Forest Stewardship Council is an international body set up to label "goodwood". Its members include the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth as well as large timber traders like B&Q, indigenous peoples' organisations, community forest associations and forest product certification institutions. This article by WWF-Australia's Michael Rae describes how the FSC is going about its task.*

by Michael Rae, WWF Ecologically Sustainable Development Program Manager

Questions surrounding processing and production methods, or PPMs as they are known to trade law aficionados, are major challenges in the debate over the links between trade and environment policy. With fears of misuse leading to either "green protectionism" or "environmental subsidies", it is not surprising it has been difficult to develop a model for an eco-labelling system that will ensure the internalisation of environmental costs and ensure a transparent, non-discriminatory trading system.

That such a model has been successfully developed for the controversial timber trade is no small achievement.

Timber is a renewable, functional and aesthetically pleasing resource. When facing a choice of materials, people with concern for the environment would choose timber over metals or plastics.

The dilemma comes when a purchaser cannot tell if the timber they want comes from a well-managed forest or if it was logged in an old-growth forest or wilderness area. The same predicament afflicts plantation grown timber: does the plantation use toxic pesticides, or was an endangered grassland destroyed to plant the trees?

The inability of consumers to tell "good wood" from bad has been a major concern. There is a crying need for a system that rigorously assesses the forest sources and the methods used in extraction so that consumers of timber can be sure their purchases contribute to better forest management rather than destruction.

The task of labelling "good wood" has been given to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international body established by a diverse group of environmental organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, timber traders, community forest associations and forest product certification institutions. WWF, Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth are among the FSC's members, as are large timber retailers like B&Q, the largest hardware chain in Europe.

The FSC's task is to provide an independent assessment of forest management against a set of performance standards agreed between the major stakeholders in the forests debate.

The FSC has negotiated a consensus on criteria for forest management from its diverse membership. These criteria



are both consistent and flexible, allowing for their adaptation to different forest types on a national or regional basis. Issues covered by the FSC's criteria include maintenance of natural forests, environmental impacts, community relations, workers' rights, indigenous peoples' rights and monitoring and assessment.

The strength of the FSC system is a requirement for independent auditing. Auditors accredited to the FSC will use national standards for the assessment of individual company forest operations. These standards will be compatible with the FSC's criteria but developed *locally* in consultation with all stakeholders.

A large Australian market exists for certified timber. Recent public opinion polling by the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) reveals that nearly nine out of ten consumers want the option of buying credibly labelled timber from well-managed forests. Only the FSC system can provide the credibility customers demand as nobody trusts forest industry self-assessed claims.

WWF is seeking to have the FSC system applied in Australia and is discussing the proposal with environment organisations, the timber trade, unions and government agencies.

Further information: WWF, Locked Bag 21, Hawthorn, VIC 3122. Ph 03 9853 7244 email: WWF-MELBOURNE@wwfnotice.infonet.com



# Forest Stewardship - Eco-label or Eco-libel?

by Tim Cadman - Native Forest Network Southern Hemisphere, Tasmania

*Regardless of whether one supports the logging of native forests or not, the author believes there is a great deal to be concerned about within the growing debate on ecolabelling of wood products.*

On first impression, it seems there is nothing to worry about: the establishment of the international body, the Forest Stewardship Council in 1992 indicated that the conservation movement was coming to grips with this thorny issue. The FSC consists of a General Assembly of two chambers: the first with a 25% voting-block and representing economic and timber interests; the second comprising social and environmental groups.

So, what's the problem if the Council is skewed in favour of the environment? A close examination of the FSC's Principles reveals that there are areas for concern.

## **"At the outset, plantations were not even considered. Instead, they have now been tacked on as a 'Draft Principle'"**

At the outset, plantations were not even considered. Instead, they have now been tacked on as a 'Draft Principle'. Within an Australian context, this is important, as most forest groups recognise the significance of plantations as an important interim step in reducing the impacts of industrial forestry on native forest ecosystems. By transferring industry into plantations, the debate becomes one of appropriate agricultural practice, not habitat, biodiversity, old growth, wilderness and the rest. While many countries have very real fears of plantations - Greenpeace New Zealand's "The Plantation Effect" is an eloquent testimony to this - the FSC from the beginning entrenched itself in native forest logging. The failure to consider plantations is reflected in the principles that FSC member groups have agreed to - many detailing "management" of native forests.

One of the strongpoints of the timber industry has been its ability to appropriate previously definitive forestry terms and distort them in order to subvert public opinion. "Wise use of sustainable resources" is a good example of industry-speak for clearfell, burn, lay wildlife poison and spray herbicide. The language of the FSC Principles is couched in such terms as: "The forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of social and environmental benefits". This could easily be mistaken for the Mission Statement of Forestry Tasmania! This is of course to pick one principle in isolation, but from a Deep Ecology perspective, such language is repugnant. The forest is a living, breathing being, not a resource.

There is a lesson to be learned from this use of language. The global timber industry is out to confuse and subvert, and environmentalists should avoid confusing the public further as to who are the greens and who are the pigs, to paraphrase George Orwell.

What message does the push towards timber labelling give to the global timber industry? It is an invitation for abuse. There is no doubt that the industry is deeply concerned about its environmental image and is quite prepared to shamelessly exploit any break it gets. One only has to read Boral's May '95 announcement that it will be seeking accreditation under Scientific Certification Systems (an FSC-affiliated body). It doesn't stand a chance, but what the heck, there's no harm in putting it in a press release, and telling concerned shareholders.

Similar shameless exploitation is apparent in the role Canada (and Australia) has played in attempts to promote existing forest

practices as being worthy of receiving environmental certification under the International Standard Organisation (ISO) standard number 14001, "Labelling of Forest Products". Australian industry for one has sought to make claims of purity by association.

Fortunately, Australia and Canada's push for ratification of ISO 14001 as an "eco-label" (Canadian forest industry's own terminology) was defeated at a Commission for Sustainable Development meeting in Oslo in June, '95.

On an ecological level, the scientific community is still 'out to lunch' as to whether any extraction timber from native forests is "sustainable". It certainly impacts on the forest ecosystem - US Forest Service research has shown that the removal of even a few trees from an area can lead to increased water runoff and stream sedimentation, simply through lack of absorption. "Ecoforestry" management techniques can also vary greatly, while still theoretically adhering to FSC principles. The Tasmanian company Pro Silva, for instance, advocates the German technique of "single-stem management" and recommends allowing forest access through "laneways". Such activities can lead to increased introduction of weeds and may even be structurally damaging. Wet eucalypt forest does not regenerate particularly well in the absence of fire, and removing individual trees may simply degrade the ecosystem.

"Management" of native forests should be acknowledged for what it is: an open-ended experiment, with making money as the bottom line.

## **"There seems to be a belief that if guidelines can be improved, then timber can be supplied from native forests indefinitely"**

There seems to be a belief that, if only forestry guidelines can be improved, then timber can continue to be supplied from native forests indefinitely. Many ecoforesters would agree, however, that current levels cannot be maintained. Given that Australia is (unfortunately) an industrial society, how then can it continue to consume industrial quantities of timber from native forests? If ecoforestry cannot provide the alternative, then its advocates should accept that they are seeking to satisfy a specialty market, and as such are simply another sector of the native forest logging industry, albeit preferable. How long will it be before eco-sawmillers will be demanding their own form of "resource security"?

What then, is the solution to this issue? If eco-labelling is to receive environmental support, labelling bodies must be clearly separated from the rapacious and cynical grip of the native forest logging industry. Meetings earlier this year with state members of the pro-woodchipping, extremist lobby group, the National Association of Forest Industries, left many conservation groups suspicious of the motives of the FSC in Australia. International environmental groups in Australia who have endorsed the FSC need to be aware that they cannot override the very sincere concerns of groups that are more specialised in forest issues. In addition to the obvious need to reduce consumption of native forest timbers, other alternatives need to be seriously considered. These would include plantation timbers, bamboo, hemp and the whole suite of alternatives. The use of the latter will not impoverish native forests and will clearly put the debate where it belongs: on the farm and out of the woods.



# Cyanide Spill "One of the Worst Mine Disasters in History"

*A massive spill of cyanide into Guyana's main river, the Essequibo, by the Canadian mining consortium Omai Gold Mines has been described as 'one of the worst mine disasters in history'. Over a million cubic metres of highly poisonous residues have poured through breaches in the mine's waste pond, killing off the river and posing serious health risks to the communities downstream. President Cheddi Jagan has announced an 'environmental disaster zone' and called for international assistance to clean up the mess and avert human tragedies. This disaster comes as Guyana continues to open its lands to intensive mining and logging development (See Action Pages).*

On August 19, the holding pond at the mine, located some 160 kilometres from the north-eastern Atlantic coast of South America broke, spilling some four billion litres of cyanide-laced waste into a tributary of the Essequibo River over a period of five days.

The mine is run by Cambior of Montreal, Canada, and Golden Star Resources of Denver, Colorado, which together own 95% of shares in Omai, which produced 252,000 troy ounces of gold last year. The Guyanese government owns the remaining 5%. Profits from the mine contributed about a quarter of the Guyanese national income of \$500 million in 1994, according to Golden Star officials.

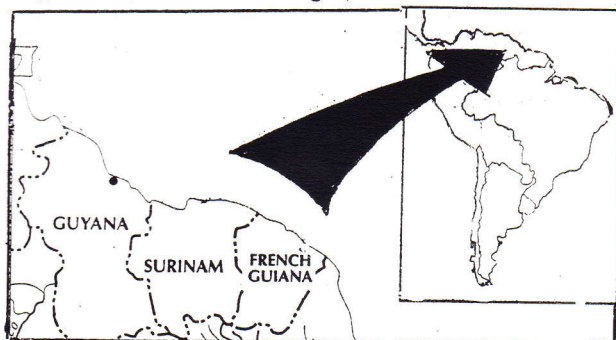
Backers of Cambior and Golden Star were also associated with the two biggest cyanide-related gold mining disasters in the United States, an IPS investigation has discovered. IPS reported that Golden Star Resources was controlled by the man who ran the Summitville gold mine in Colorado, site of the most expensive environmental disaster in U.S. history. Cambior bought up a mining company that ran a South Carolina gold mine which was the site of the biggest-ever cyanide spill prior to the Omai disaster.

Summitville, which opened in 1986, introduced a technology called "cyanide leaching" to extract gold from ore. This process involves spraying cyanide solution on the ore to extract gold. "The disasters in Colorado, South Carolina and Guyana show that cyanide heap leaching just does not work," says Will Patrick, a field officer for the Mineral Policy Centre, an activist group that tracks mining companies.

Environmental groups have repeatedly warned that the owners of Omai have a disastrous track record. These two companies also control major mining operations in Burma, French Guyana, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Suriname and Venezuela.

The World Rainforest Movement, which has been calling for greater controls on foreign companies active in the interior of Guyana for many years, advocates the following interim measures:

1. The Omai mine must be closed indefinitely. There should be



no question of it reopening until a completely reformed regulatory system is seen to be in place and functioning.

2. A fully independent commission of enquiry involving all sectors of Guyanese society must be set up with free access to all relevant information.
3. Omai Gold Mines Ltd. should be obliged to release its 1991 environmental impact assessment, plus all relevant technical, geological and environmental studies so that the nature and extent of the contamination can be assessed.
4. Cambior Inc. and Golden Star Resources Ltd. must accept full responsibility for the disaster and meet the full costs of the clean up and all reparations. The companies' assets and other mines and prospects in Guyana should be frozen until these obligations are discharged.
5. The World Bank, which underwrites the Omai venture through its Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, must also accept responsibility for the disaster. It should institute an emergency programme to provide financial and technical assistance to the Government and to affected communities, to contain the pollution and rehabilitate the environment.
6. The draft Environmental Protection Act and form of the proposed Environmental Protection Agency should be the subject of detailed consultation with all sectors of Guyanese society, especially Amerindians who constitute the majority of the population in the interior, before they are enacted.
7. No further large-scale mining permits should be issued until these new laws, regulations and institutional reforms are in place and seen to be functioning.

Sources: World Rainforest Movement, IPS



# BY THE RIVER WITH DOUG FERGUSON

*In 1986, Doug Ferguson from Lismore RIC travelled to Ecuador at the invitation of the Ecuadorian Government to help establish and demarcate the coastal indigenous territory now known as the Awa Ethnic Forest Reserve. Around this early project, Doug formed a branch of RIC called the CIBT - El Centro de Investigacion de Los Bosques Tropicales. With Colombian botanist Martha Mondragon, he pulled together a strong team and established many important and successful projects in the three main geological areas of Ecuador, the Coast, the Andean Sierras and the Amazon. The following conversation took place on his farm at the headwaters of the Ecuadorian Amazon with RIC film maker Dean Jefferys who is currently making a video on CIBT and its projects.*

The story of the rainforests and their continuing destruction has been adequately expressed. Suffice to say that here in Ecuador we have the fastest rate of forest destruction in South America, in the true heartland of terrestrial diversity.

My own story here is not really one of addressing the ongoing ecological catastrophe, though this is where the activity is focused. All these actions mirror one's own personal evolution and our communal evolution as a species on this planet. I believe that we have manifested this scenario so that we can get on with it and take the next step....

"I don't identify myself as a forest saver ... I believe my role has been to hold the doors open to let light into a dark place"

For me I don't identify myself as a forest saver or a demarcationist or permaculturalist. I believe my role here in Ecuador has been to hold the doors open and create a space in an almost impossible situation, to let light into a dark place.

I've been working for an extension of that moment that first enveloped us on the mountain (Mt Nardi and Terania Creek\*) - an extension into a more universal understanding of who we are, what we are and why we are here on Earth. Towards a planetary consciousness and creating a basis of how we can have a future Earth. That was like a call coming through from another realm and I think we did answer the call. ...[Since then] I've done a number of circles - or maybe they're more like spirals of evolution.

Although we have helped to make a more just society and address some of the problems, I don't think anything is really



"saved". That thinking is really mistaken now. It's not like we can save that tree or save that forest or that animal, really, it's either a green Earth or a bowl of dust. So it's a whole realm of consciousness, a whole level of being has to be changed and that's what I'm working for.

"I've been working for an extension into a more universal understanding of who we are, what we are and why we are here on Earth"

So for me there has never been a separation between working for the planet and the process of planetary awakening. We've had various trigger events. A lot of people participated in the Harmonic Convergence. But there have been other triggers. Here in Ecuador, we hosted the Second Gate which came after the 11/11 in Egypt\*\*. Before that I

\* Terania and Mt. Nardi were the sites of the first mass protests in Australia, and possibly the world, against the logging of rainforests. The protests took place in 1979 and the early 1980's and led to the formation of the Rainforest Information Centre.

\*\* Events similar in nature to the better-known Harmonic Convergence



went to Macchu Picchu with a small group of friends in what I believe was a global event where we welcomed in the Goddess, which I guess is a forever process. We did 3 ceremonies - one at Macchu Picchu, one at Lake Titikaca and one at Tiwananka in Bolivia. We put the sun to bed with one hand and as it was a full moon, we turned around and with our other hand lifted up the full moon and welcomed in the Goddess.

When we think of the Tagaeri, those last wild people out there, I think for me they hold a very important place in human consciousness, a connection to our starry being. Lots of people don't understand Tribal People - how fine is their survival, how hard it was to maintain the blood line, food chain and understand their origins. In Australia for example, the aboriginals had their own personal names which united them with the stars, way out there, to the pool or the rock or river that their ancestors put there that they had to look after. They understood they came from the stars and understood it as a sacred duty to look after the Earth. It's been good for me to work with Indigenous People. As I see it now it's not the Bundjalung, or the Huaorani, it's a starry tribe, it's an Earth tribe, one people, one Earth. The threads that bind us are very fine and subtle. I believe the last wild people are a living reminder of that reality.

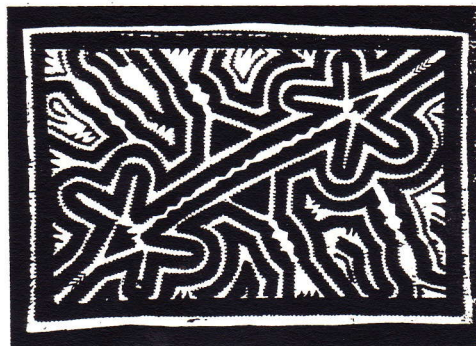
I bought this farm down here in the Amazon and this will be my centre and I think this will probably be where I'll base my life and hopefully this will be my own little centre of light...

I think what's happening for me is it's not so much a story of the Earth and its destruction, it's a story of evolution, and to partake in that evolution actively with people who have acknowledged that awakening - that's where I find a spring-board for action.

I have faith my contemporaries are out there and that these filaments of light we are creating all over the planet is what can bring that extended moment of consciousness that enveloped us on the mountain into a planetary wave of consciousness.



## PNG: Maisin Art & Conservation



In mid-1995, the University Art Museum at the University of California, Berkeley, held an exhibition of Melanesian Tapa Cloth, entitled *Jumping Lines: Maisin Art and Rainforest Conservation*.

Working with Greenpeace International, the museum contacted artists of the Maisin people of Papua New Guinea, hopeful that by presenting their extraordinary tapa cloth paintings in America, they will be able to help them ensure the survival of their culture and environment. The sale of tapa cloth paintings is, at present, one of the few viable alternatives identified by the Maisin to selling the rights to log the estimated 100,000 acres of tropical rainforest under their tribal stewardship. Although in need of cash for medicine, education, and transport, and under heavy pressure to sell their timber rights to foreign logging corporations, the Maisin have decided to preserve their environment and are exploring possible designation of their land as a National Park or World Heritage Site. In conjunction with this exhibition, the museum and Greenpeace sponsored one clan leader who visited the U.S. to develop long-term tapa marketing strategies as well as to confer with those interested in setting up limited eco-tourism in the Maisin region. Exhibition co-curator, Lafcadio Cortesi, of Greenpeace pointed out: "Forest communities like the Maisin, who want to incorporate aspects of western life - such as formal education and health care - into their traditional lives, often face the choice between selling off their entire resource base to foreign companies in hopes of acquiring these services or being shut out of development opportunities entirely." Tapa cloth painting is practised in many equatorial regions, most notably in many islands of the South Pacific. Tapa cloth is made by soaking and then pounding the inner layer of the bark of the paper mulberry tree until it is almost paper thin. The artists derive their pigments from rainforest plants and the colours range from bright red to deep brown. Maisin tapa is distinctive for its vivid, abstract compositions that explode with kaleidoscopic energy. The vast majority of Maisin tapa artists are women, and in Maisin culture, tapa cloth paintings function primarily as clothing, bedding, as sacred clan designs used in healing ceremonies and other rituals, and as a form of art and wealth. While developing markets for such alternative forest products overseas may not fulfill all the Maisin (or other PNG peoples) development needs, it is a step towards preserving the tribal culture and rainforest heritage of this region while providing the basic services that the local people require.



### IF THE THUNDER DON'T GET YA THEN THE LIGHTNING WILL

***The Dying of the Trees; The Pandemic in America's Forests* by Charles E. Little, Viking, 275 pages and *Hope, Human and Wild; True Stories of Living Lightly on the Earth* by Bill McKibben, Little, Brown, 288 pages.**

If you've ever wondered what is meant by "killing the messenger" and you missed the attacks on Charles Darwin after he wrote *The Origin of Species* and the chemical industry's assault on Rachel Carson after she wrote *Silent Spring*, just watch what happens to Charles Little once people start reading *The Dying of the Trees*, which just hit the bookstores. Little traveled around the country talking to foresters, ecologists, chemists, biologists, and government officials and has pieced together a most disturbing "pandemic in America's forests."

Forests from New England to Georgia, from Michigan to the Northwest are suffering from a variety of disasters all because humans have rearranged nature's original balances, a lethal hat trick of clearcutting, pollution and now excess UV-B from ozone depletion.

Many pieces of this story have been told before. Broken down into its component parts, each woeful example has heretofore been run through the gauntlet of doubting scientists, often funded or encouraged by industry. The results are usually a confused citizenry and mild public policies. Acid rain, pollution credits, delayed fuel efficiency standards, "salvage" timber measures and a weak Montreal Protocol.

The results? Just listen to how Little sums up what is happening to the trees: "And now, as we have seen, the tempo of the catastrophe has been increasing in the post-World War II era... High-elevation spruce and fir along the Appalachian ridge... have been reduced to a fraction of their original numbers. The great ponderosa pines are beset by ozone drifting to the mountains from polluted California valleys. Ruthless logging has changed the composition of the forests of the intermountain West, rendering them vulnerable to pests and death and, finally, mass fire. The gypsy moth has opportunistically followed the axe and plowshare... through weakened forests... In the mixed mesophytic forest, one of the two oldest temperate-zone forests on earth, ecologist Orié Loucks [at Ohio's Miami University] estimates that as many as eighty tree-size woody plant species... are showing the effects of years of oxidant concentrations and acid deposition driven eastward by prevailing winds from the industrialized river valleys of the Midwest and the Southern border states. The impact, Loucks believes, may permanently reduce the biological diversity of this extraordinary ecosystem."

The story goes on to articulate in impressive detail many other threatened trees and forests. One of the most disturbing accounts is of the damage to white pines in Ohio

during the spring of 1993. Record low stratospheric ozone was measured while Loucks observed severe ultraviolet radiation damage to 13% of his white pine study plot.

Even more disconcerting is Little's explanation of numerous feedback loops in which the dying of trees causes even more trees to die, global warming causes even more of the ozone shield to be lost and so on until "tree death becomes a cause of a potentially catastrophic failure of global ecological balances."

McKibben's *Hope, Human and Wild* is a search for ways out of our environmental crisis. He tries to "imagine a future vastly different from the present, one where people consume much less and restrain themselves much more. When 'public' is no longer a curse word, and 'growth' increasingly is."

He questions the sacred cows of the environmental optimists. His search takes us from New England farms and town meetings to Kerala, India and Curitiba, Brazil. Strange destinations, it would seem, until we learn that these places have found some of the answers we seek.

Kerala, on one seventieth the per capita income of the US, nearly mirrors the US in health, longevity and population growth. Even though the conventional wisdom holds that our cars, malls and cable hookups are signs of the wealth which allows us to live lighter on the planet than those in the third world -- it ain't true in Kerala. You'll enjoy reading why -- in part due to a cultural sense of equality and a rare example of successful land reform.

Curitiba too, provides encouraging examples of success. Mass transit works and is cheap, programs for the homeless have a stunning success rate, a pedestrian mall goes up overnight. The mayor is actually part of the solution -- an intriguing story compared with the anti-public sector mantra that we have heard here for the last twenty years.

In McKibben's words, "This book offers no utopias; indeed, as the word is commonly understood, we have been living in a utopia all our lives, a place as sumptuously appointed and as divorced from physical labor as any in history. What I have been seeking instead are models of some postutopia, places that resemble neither our pleasant daydream of a society nor the various nightmares so obvious in the world around us."

Little said that despite the gloomy prognosis for the forests, he did not set out to be an alarmist. He just sought the whole story. Six years ago, McKibben took a similar journey, and he laid down his bleak findings in *The End of Nature*. Only by first seeing into the maw can we take the next steps towards renewal, recovery and restoration.

Review taken from *Ozone Action News*, a bi-weekly publication of Ozone Action, 1621 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20009 Tel: 202/265-6738 Fax: 202/986-6041 e-mail: [ozone\\_action@essential.org](mailto:ozone_action@essential.org)



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